MANIFESTATIONS OF THE ALL-MERCIFUL

Reflections on the Daily Supplications
read in the Blessed Month of Ramadhan

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

Manifestations of the All–Merciful

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point

Commentary and reflections on the first portion of the supplication recited daily during the month of Ramadhan that begins with "Allahumma adkhil `alaa ahli-l-quboor as-suroor" (O Allah, give happiness to the people of the grave). Includes Part I .and II

Humble Presentation

I humbly present this short commentary of the daily supplication of the Holy Month of Ramadān to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) and his infallible progeny (as), who represent the perfect Manifestations of the All-Merciful, and sincerely pray to the All-.Merciful Lord to accept the offering

This humble attempt should be taken as a point of ascent to the meanings of other supplications narrated from the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny (as). When reciting any supplication, one should never limit oneself to the periphery but should struggle for the center and the spirit. Our initial journey would be ‘the journey of thought and concept’, but this should lead us to overhaul ourselves and ‘comprehend ’.the kernel of prayer

May Almighty Allāh assist all of us before we lose the priceless opportunity of this .transient life

Walhamdu lillāhi Rabbi’l ‘Ālamīn

And All praises belong solely to Allāh, the Lord of the Universe

Utterly destitute to the All-Affluent

Abū Muhammad Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn

Qum al-Muqaddasa

Sha'bān al-Mu'azzam ۱۴۲۳

From the heavenly atmosphere of the neighbourhood of Hadrat Fātima Ma'sūma (as), may the Almighty imbue our hearts with intense love for her, and may He Grace us with

.her intercession-Āmīn

Foreword

In the Name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

All Praise belongs to Allāh, Lord of the Worlds, and the good outcome belongs to the pious; may Allāh bless His chosen elite ones, the choicest from among those whom He favors - the manifestation of His kindness to the world, namely Muhammad (s) and his .(Pure Progeny (as

In the Qur'ān, Allāh (swt) says: "When My servants ask about Me, I am indeed close to (them. I listen to the prayer of every supplicant, when he calls on Me."(al-Qur'ān ٢:١٨۶

In this day and age of strife, perplexity and confusion, it is all the more necessary that we 'call' on Allāh (swt) to protect us from the trials and tribulations of the modern era. The supplications taught to us by the A'immah (as) are indeed the best way to call upon Allāh (swt). While it is true that ritualistic recitations of supplications taught to us by the A'immah (as) have always been a significant part of our program of worship ('ibādah), on a daily basis, we hardly ever pause to ponder upon the profound .pronouncement we utter by way of the Du'ā

The Blessed Prophet (s) has said, "Allāh does not answer the supplication of a heedless heart," and what that thought in mind, the present volume, Manifestations of the All-Merciful, by Shaykh Muhammad Khalfan, is a welcome addition to the corpus of literature on the commentaries of the commonly recited supplications as this work goes beyond

the translation and a brief explanation of the words of the Du'ā. This volume is a .wonderful exposition of the richness of such supplications

I recall, vividly, some four years ago, during the blessed month of Ramadān, receiving by way of e-mail from Shaykh Khalfan, a regular dose of the commentary on the verses of this Du'ā, highly recommended for the month of Ramadān. Each day I eagerly looked forward to his inspiring e-mail, elaborating the deep meanings contained within each word of this Du'ā. Subsequently, the Tabligh Section of Dar-es-Salaam Jama'at, under the able leadership of Al-Hājj Mehboob Somji published the .work in book form

I am so very pleased to be writing this forward for this second edition, which has .encapsulated the full commentary of all fifteen verses of the Du'ā

The author, Shaykh Khalfan, is a scholar residing in Qum, who has a deep and unique insight into matters spiritual and we are blessed to have an opportunity to share this insight through this publication. Works of this nature show us that the profound words of the Du'ā, from the Holy Prophet (s) and his Pure Progeny (as) are timeless and are as relevant today in the ٢١st century as they were in the seventh century when they were first uttered - perhaps more so today, when our preoccupation in perfecting the material aspects of life has robbed us of the spiritual dimension and has led us to be heedless of the very essence of our

existence. Even our mode, manner and places of worship, may have given us the .'‘means’, however not the ‘end

Thus, this book can be a beacon for us to regain sight of the ‘end’ – as the author elaborates in his introduction – this is a ‘journey of thought and concept’ that will lead .us to ’comprehend the kernel of prayer’, Inshā-Allāh

.May Allāh (swt) give us ability to supplicate with a heart that is not heedless

Hasnain Walji

Plano, Texas

Rajab ۲۷th ۱۴۲۶ ah / August ۳۱st ۲۰۰۵ ce

Understanding the Merit of the Supplication

:The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said

مَنْ دَعَا بِهٰذَا الدُّعاءِ فِی شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ بَعْدَ الْمَكْتُوبَهِ غُفِرَتْ ذُنُوبُهُ إِلــى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَهِ.

Whosoever beseeches with this supplication in the Holy month of Ramadān, after the“ (prescribed prayer, his sins (dhunūb) shall be forgiven till the Day of Judgment.”(۱

Du‘ā is not a mere verbal utterance, but “a state of real want,” which is mostly manifested by the verbal supplication. However, as long as there is no harmony between “the inner state of want” and “the verbal utterance,” the supplication would .lack its spirit

Realizing this, we say that “the state of yearning for the betterment of the human species” is an ‘innate want’ of every human being who enjoys an untainted soul. This is because every human being has been fashioned with the Attributes of Almighty Allāh. And one such attribute is “mercy” which is all-embracing. Therefore the human being innately wants the betterment of every other

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۹۵, pg. ۱۲۰, ch. ۶ -۱

human being. The reason why many of us do not experience this quality is because of our separation from the neighbourhood of our All-Loving Creator. Therefore we need to undergo self-purification to expose this quality, which has been veiled by the accumulation of sins and attachment to the world of matter. And when we experience the state of "yearning for the betterment of others" and translate the same in the form of words, our supplication shall carry meaning, and we will benefit from its great .merit

However, those who have not attained this station of proximity should not despair, but recite this prayer regularly with reflection. If such illuminative supplications were intended for perfect human beings only, then the Holy Prophet (s) would not teach it to all and sundry. Therefore, we should always try to recite the supplication with reflection and change. If one were to inculcate the sublime thoughts contained in this .prayer, he could really wake up from his deep slumber and change his life

In this Glorious Month, when the over-flowing Grace of the All-Gracious is continuous, let us humbly ask Almighty Allāh to enable us to be among those who utter this .wonderful supplication as a manifestation of our inner spirits

O Allāh, Instil Happiness in the Spirits of the Inhabitants of the Grave

point

أَللّٰهُمَّ أَدْخِلْ عَلى أَهلِ القُبُورِ السُّرُورَ

O Allāh, Instil Happiness in the Spirits of the Inhabitants of the Grave

Supplication and the Law of Cause Effect

Du'ā is an excellent means of achieving one's legitimate desires. The universal law of 'cause and effect' itself encourages us to seek

help from the Principal Cause - who is Almighty Allāh. Thus even in circumstances when things can be acquired through natural means, one should not think that one is .needless of supplication

Some, on the other hand, may think that supplication is sufficient and there is no need of achieving our goals through the means that are at our disposal. Clearly, this path also, is that of ignorance, for Almighty Allāh has established the system of cause and effect and encouraged the human being to employ it for his noble ends. The following :word of wisdom from Imām al-Sādiq (as) emphasizes this

أَبَى اللّٰهُ أَنْ يُجْرِىَ الأَشْيَاءَ إِلاَّ بِأَسْبَابِهَا، فَجَعَلَ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَباً.

Allāh does not permit things to take place except by their causes; thus, He made a" (cause for every thing."(١

Seeking the Cause of Instilling Happiness

Having known the aforesaid, every understanding supplicant, would seek the causes that "instil happiness in spirits of the inhabitants of the grave" apart from praying for the same. Our holy traditions (which indeed are extensions of "light") have informed us how to make the deceased happy. Following are traditions worthy of :contemplation

Imām al-Sādiq (as) was asked: 'Is it possible to recite prayers for the dead?' He .١ :said, 'Yes,' and added

إِنَّ الْمَيِّتَ لَيَفْرَحُ بِالتَّرَحُّمِ عَلَيْهِ وَالإِسْتِغْفَارِ، كَمَا يَفْرَحُ الْحَىُّ بالْهَدِيَّه.

Surely, a dead person rejoices when he is pitied and forgiveness is sought for him," (just as a living person rejoices upon receiving a gift."(٢

The Holy Prophet (s) once passed by the grave of a person who was buried a day .٢ :before, and saw his family weeping. Observing this, he said

لَرَكْعَتَانِ خَفِيْفَتَانِ مِمَّا تَحْتَقِرُوْنَ أَحَبُّ إِلَى صَاحِبِ هٰذاَ

۱- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۲, pg. ۹۰

۲- al-Mahajjatu'l al-Baydā', v. ۸. pg. ۲۹۲

الْقَبْرِ مِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ كُلِّهَا.

"Indeed, two small units of prayer which you consider insignificant is more lovable to the inhabitant of this grave than your world in its entirety."(1)

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ الْهَدَايَا لِلأَمْوَاتِ الدُّعَاءُ وَ الإِسْتِغْفَارُ.

"Indeed, the gifts [from the living] for the dead are du'ā' (supplication) and istighfār (seeking forgiveness of the sins of the dead)."(2)

4. Imām 'Alī al-Ridā (as) is reported to have said:

مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ زَارَ قَبْرَ مُؤْمِنٍ فَقَرَأَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِى لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ سَبْعَ مَرَّاتٍ إِلاَّ غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ وَ لِصَاحِبِ الْقَبْرِ.

"Whosoever of God's servants visits the grave of a beliver, and recites seven times "Innā anzalnāhu fī laylati'l qadr [...]" Allāh would forgive him and the inhabitant of the grave."(3) and (4)

5. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

مَنْ مَرَّ عَلَى الْمَقَابِرِ فَقَرَأَ قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ إِحْدَى عَشْرَهَ مَرَّةً وَوَهَبَ أَجْرَهُ لِلأَمْوَاتِ أُعْطِىَ مِنَ الأَجْرِ بِعَدَدِ الأَمْوَاتِ.

"Whosoever passes by the graves and recites Qul Huwallāhu Ahad 11 times and gifts its reward to the deceased, he is granted a reward proportional to the number of the dead."(5)

6. Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq (as) is reported(6) to have said:

تَدْخُلُ عَلَى الْمَيِّتِ فِى قَبْرِهِ الصَّلاهُ وَالصَّوْمُ وَالْحَجُّ وَالصَّدَقَهُ وَالْبِرُّ وَالدُّعاءُ وَيُكْتَبُ أَجْرُهُ لِلَّذِى فَعَلَهُ وَ لِلْمَيِّتِ.

"Prayers, Fasting, Hajj, Sadaqa, good deeds and Du'ā' reach the dead in his grave, and their reward is written for [both] the doer and the deceased."

7. Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq (as) is reported(7) to have said:

مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ عَنِ مَيِّتٍ عَمَلَ [عَمَلاً] خَيْرٍ أَضْعَفَ اللَّهُ لَهُ

۱- Tanbīhu‘l Khawātir, pg. ۴۵۳

۲- al-Mahajjatu‘l Baydā’, v. ۸, pg. ۲۹۱

۳- Armaghāne Asmān, pg. ۵۴۱

۴- Man Lā Yahduruhu’l Faqīh, v. ۱, pg. ۱۸۱

۵- Mustadrak al-Wasā’il, v. ۲, pg. ۴۸۳

۶- Wasāi’l al-Shī‘a ilā Tahsīli Masā’il al-Sharī‘a, v. ۸, pg. ۲۷۹

۷- Ibid.

أَجْرَهُ وَنَفَعَ اللَّهُ بِهِ الْمَيِّتَ.

Whosoever among the Muslims does a good act for a dead person, Allāh rewards“ ”.him manifold and makes the dead benefit from the same

Therefore, as we pray for the deceased to attain happiness in the intermediate realm (barzakh), we should also make efforts to act on the means of their happiness as .taught to us and humbly pray to Almighty Allāh to accept our deeds

The late Āyatullāh Shihāb al-Dīn Mar'ashī in his last will(١) gave some thought provoking advice to his son. One of them was: "I advise him (my son) to read the Holy Qur'ān and send its blessings to the souls of those Shī'ites of the Household of the ”.Holy Prophet (as) who did not leave any offspring

Therefore, in this Holy month of grace, let us not forget the inhabitants of the grave, including those whom we are not familiar with. In addition, let us also pray for the well-being of those presumed kuffār (disbelievers), who although were apparently known to be disbelievers, had professed the unity of Allāh and became Muslims prior .to the departure of their souls from this world

In his Chehl Hadith (Forty Traditions), the late Āyatullāh al-Khumaynī (may Allāh elevate his soul) relates something thought provoking from his teacher in 'Irfān (Divine gnosis) - Āyatullāh Shāhābādī. He says: Our Shaykh, the accomplished 'ārif that he was (i.e. Āyatullāh Shāhābādī) - may my soul be his ransom - used to say: "Never call down curses (la'n) on anybody, though he be

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١- Wasiyyatnāme-ye Āyatullāh al-'Uzmā Mar'ashī

a kāfir concerning whom you do not know how he made the transit from this world to the next, and unless an infallible walī (saint) informs you concerning his condition after death. For it is possible that he may have attained faith before the time of death. (Hence let your curse be of a general character.(١)

And in another place(٢) he says: Our great master, the accomplished 'ārif, Shāhābādī - rūhī fidāh (may my soul be his ransom) - used to say, 'Do not look down on even a kāfir (non-believer) in your heart. It is possible that the divine light of his inner nature may lead him to faith and your rebuke may lead you towards a wretched life in the Hereafter. Of course, to practice al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'ani'l-munkar (enjoining right conduct and forbidding bad behavior) is something different from the inner feeling of contempt.' He would even say, 'Never curse the unbelievers about whom it is not known that they will leave the world in the state of unbelief. If they leave the world as rightly-guided servants of God, their spiritual rectitude may prove '.to be an obstruction in the way of your own spiritual advancement

Therefore, as we utter this verse of supplication, let us commit ourselves to performing deeds of virtue for the deceased Muslims, as a practical demonstration of .our true desire for the happiness of the deceased

(O Allāh, Enrich Every Indigent (Poor One

point

أَللَّهُمَّ أَغْنِ كُلَّ فَقِيْرٍ

(O Allāh, Enrich Every Indigent (Poor One

The Supplicant's All–Embracing Spirit

:[...Allāhumma aghni kulla]

One preposition employed in nearly

Chehl Hadīth, ۲۸th tradition -۱

Chehl Hadīth, ۳rd tradition -۲

every verse of this supplication is “kull” which means “every”. The supplicant always tries to seek the betterment of every human being. He assumes a Divine spirit throughout the invocation. Egoism no more exists. He frees himself from the shackles of yearning only for the betterment and comfort of his self. The Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny were of such character. They yearned for the betterment and emancipation of all. In order to understand this exalted spirit better, study the :following quotations of the Holy Qur’ān and traditions

:[Almighty Allāh says in the Qur’ān [Chapter al-A‘rāf- ٧:١٥٦ .١

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ .

”.[And My Mercy encompasses all things [i.e. every dependent being“

:And in [Chapter al-Anbiyā’- ٢١:١٠٧] addressing His Noble Messenger, He says .٢

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلاَّ رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ .

”.And we have not sent you but as a mercy for the worlds“

:And in [Chapter al-Kahf - ١٨:٦] addressing His Beloved, He says .٣

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا .

Then it is near that you will kill yourself in grief, for their outcomes, if they do not“ [.believe in this announcement.” [MK. Trans

:The following is a radiant verse for the daily du‘ā’ of the holy month of Rajab .۴

يَا مَنْ يُعْطِي مَنْ لَمْ يَسْأَلْهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَعْرِفْهُ تَحَنُّناً مِنْهُ وَرَحْمَةً.

O One Who always gives [even] to one who does not ask Him and who does not“ ”.(even) know Him, out of His Kindness and Mercy

:[Almighty Allāh says in [Chapter Tāhā- ٢٠:٢ .۵

مَا

أَنْزَلْنا عَلَيْکَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقى .

We did not send the Qur'ān so that you distress yourself [in the path of propagation" ".[by struggling to force the people towards it

:And in [Chapter al-Fātir- ۳۵:۸] He says .۶

فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَ_فْسُکَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرَاتٍ .

"...[And therefore do not consume yourself, in grief for them [due to their unbelief..."

:And in [Chapter al-Mumtahana- ۶۰:۸] He says .۷

لَا يَنْهَاکُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوکُمْ فِی الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوکُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِکُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ .

Allāh does not forbid you from doing good and acting fairly with those who have not" made war against you on account of religion nor driven you out of your homes; surely ".Allāh loves those who act equitably

In a will(۱) addressed to his son - Hājj Sayyid Ahmad Khumaynī - the late Āyatullāh .۸ Khumaynī says: "...These are the miracles of the Noble Messenger (s)...who, standing at the apex of the peak of human perfection, sees the realities clearly and without any intervening hijāb (curtain). At the same time he is present in all the dimensions of :humanity and stages of being, and being the highest manifestation of

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ .

[He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden." [۵۷:۳"

wants all human beings to achieve such a perfection. It was painful for him to see that :they failed to achieve such a station, and perhaps the verse

طه. مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْکَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى .

Tā hā: We have not"

Jelwehāye Rahmānī, Translated by Al-Tawhīd Journal, v. XI, Nos. ۳ ۴ pg. ۶۸ -۱

[sent down the Qur'ān to you that you distress yourself." [۲۰:۱-۲

makes an oblique reference to this fact, and perhaps this hadith from him also refers :to it

مَا أُوذِیَ نَبِیٌّ مِثْلَ مَا أُوْذِیْتُ.

(No Prophet was made to suffer torment like me."(۱"

:Marhūm Amīn al-Islam Tabrasī in his Majma' al-Bayān narrates the following .۹

ولبث فی قومه ألف سنه إلا خمسین عاماً... وکان یدعوهم لیلاً ونهاراً، فلا یزیدهم دعاؤه إلا فراراً، وکان یضربه قومه حتی یغشی علیه، فإذا أفاق قال: "اللهم اهدِ قومی فإنهم لا یعلمون."

Prophet Nūh (as) lived among his people for ۹۵۰ years...And he would invite them day" and night, but it would add nothing in them save repulsion. Sometimes his people would beat him so much that he would fall unconscious, and on regaining (consciousness, he would say: "O Allāh guide my people for they do not know."(۲

:(Following is the first verse of a beautiful poem attributed to Imām 'Alī (as)(۳ .۱۰

:When he saw Ibn Muljim he recited the following near 'Amr bin Ma'dikarb

أُرِیْدُ حَیَاتَهُ وَ یُرِیْدُ قَتْلِی.

I seek his life and he wants me to be killed

:(It is narrated that Prophet 'Isā (as) once said(۴ .۱۱

کُنْ کَالشَّمْسِ تَطْلَع عَلی الْبَرِّ وَالْفَاجِرِ.

".Be like the sun; it shines upon the virtuous and sinful"

Sayyid Radī al-Dīn ibn Tāwūs is one of the great Shī'a scholars whose works enjoy .۱۲ a certain veneration in the scholarly circles. In his well-known prayer manual - Iqbāl al-Ā'māl, which indeed is a masterpiece of devotional supplications, he narrates the :following

كنت فى ليله جليله من شهر رمضان، بعد

p: ١٢

١- Kanzu'l 'Ummāl, v. ١١, tradition no. ٣٢١۶١

٢- Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān, v. ۴, pg. ٨۶۶

٣- Minasha'r al-Mansūb ila 'l Imām al-Wasiyy 'Alī bin Abī Tālib, pg. ۶۴

۴- Iqbāl al-Ā'māl, v. ١, pg. ٣٨۵

تصـنيف هذا الكتاب بزمان، وأنا أدعو فی السحر لمن يجب أو يحسن تقديم الدعاء له ولی و... فورد علی خاطری أن الجاحدين لله جـل جلالـه ولنعمـه، والمسـتخفين بحرمتـه، والمبـدلين لحكمـه فی عبـاده وخليقتـه، ينبغی أن يبـدأ بالـدعاء لهم بالهـدايه من ضلالتهم، فإن جنايتهم علی الربوبيه والحكمه الإلهيه والجلاله النبويه أشد من جنايه العارفين بالله وبالرسول (ص).

Some time after having written this book, during one of the great nights of the holy“ month of Ramadān, when I was praying at sahar time for those of whom it is compulsory or good to present in prayer and also for myself and... then the following thought crossed my mind: it behooves one to first pray for the guidance of those who deny Allāh and reject His blessings and those who belittle His Sanctity and change His rule [over His servants and creation], because their crime in relation to the lordship of God, Divine wisdom, and prophetic majesty is more grave than the crime of those ”...(who know Allāh (swt) and His Messenger (s

:(Then, after a few lines he says(١

فـدعوت لكـل ضـال عن الله بالهـدايه إليه، ولكـل ضـال عن الرسول بـالرجوع إليه، ولكل ضال عن الحق بالاعتراف به والاعتماد عليه. ثم دعوت لأهل التوفيق والتحقيق بالثبوت علی توفيقهم، والزياده فی تحقيقهم، ودعوت لنفسی ومن...

So I prayed for all those who have deviated from Allāh to be guided towards Him, and“ all those who have deviated from His Messenger to return to him, and all those who have strayed from the truth to admit it

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Iqbāl al-Ā‘māl, v. ١, pg. ٣٨۴ -١

and rely on it. Then I prayed for the people of Divine succor (ahl al-tawfīq) to be established on their path and for the men of realization (ahl al-tahqīq) to attain greater realization, and [then] I prayed for myself and those...”

Therefore, when reciting the verses of this supplication of the holy month, the supplicant should open his heart for all in unison with the Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny.

Objection

Does the aforesaid mean that we should also pray for the material well-being of every hypocrite and disbeliever, when we know that they are the sources of corruption and mischief in the society? Don’t we know about their evil state described in various places in the Qur’ān? How can we yearn for the material prosperity of such people?

Response

Almighty Allāh wants both the spiritual as well as the physical betterment of every human being. The purpose of human creation according to the Holy Qur’ān, as shall be soon discussed, is not only meant for the believers, but for the entire caravan of humanity. The verses cited above clearly indicate how the Prophet (s) suffered agony due to the adamant stance of the disbelievers. ‘The agony’ was due to the all-embracing spirit that he possessed. He wanted the salvation of every human being.

The supplicant who is submissive to Almighty Allāh should also like the same to be realized for every human being. However, it would be wrong for him to seek their material prosperity for the sake of material prosperity. When seeking the

material prosperity of every human being, one must ask Almighty Allāh for that material prosperity that would serve as a means for the goal of human existence. One should desire, for example, that every human being receives food and shelter, so that .they can worship Almighty Allāh and attain His proximity

There are different reasons why some human beings are deprived of basic necessities of life. The fundamental cause of many of the deprivations is the 'deficiency of the receptacle of Grace.' Otherwise the Creator's Grace is abundantly poured down to all. The Holy Qur'ān so beautifully expounds this truth in chapter ar-:Ra'd (١٣), verse ١٧

أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَــــآءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا... .

He sent down water from the sky, and the channels flowed, each according to its" "...measure

Those who consume foods that would ruin their digestive system, for example, create the gateway of deprivation from food themselves. Those who engage in sin, hamper their sustenance themselves. Both material and spiritual prosperity depend on the receptacle. Otherwise the All-Merciful can never be thought to be stingy or subjective. .He is always al-Jawād and Open-Handed

Therefore, clean and pure water descends from the sky, but dirty receptacles always receive dirty water, narrow receptacles always receive less water, perforated receptacles always lose water, etc. This is a universal law that the Qur'ān so .beautifully expounds

It is noteworthy that the word "Rahīm" that we always utter when starting Chapter al-Fātiha does not literally indicate that His ever-rewarding Mercy and Guidance is only reserved for the

believers; rather such Mercy is poured down upon all, but only those receptacles who believed in the truth and have the capacity to accept can absorb the same. For a better understanding of this vital truth those who are interested may look at Ādāb al-Salāt of the late Āyatullāh Khumaynī.(١)

The Benefits of Prayers in Absence

Another very important trend in the supplication is praying for others in their absence. There are several Qur'ānic verses and traditions that lay great emphasis on this and enumerate good reward for the same. Following are examples worthy of consideration:

١. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said(٢):

لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَسْرَعُ إِجَابَةً مِنْ دَعْوَهِ غَائبٍ لِغَائِبٍ.

"Nothing is accepted as quickly as one's supplication for another in his absence."

٢. It is reported from Imām al-Sādiq (as) that he said(٣):

دُعَاءُ الْمُؤْمِنِ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ يَدْفَعُ عَنْهُ الْبَلاءَ، وَ يَدِرُّ عَلَيْهِ الرِّزْقَ.

"The du'ā' of a believer for another believer dispels calamities from him and showers him with abundant sustenance."

Absolute Need of the Human Being

In the culture of the Holy Qur'ān every human being, whatever status he may have in this world, is needy. The Holy Qur'ān [٣٥:١٥] says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَـى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ .

"O human beings, you are needy to Allāh, and it is Allāh Who is Affluent, the Praised one."

This verse is in complete harmony with intellectual proof, which considers every dependent being to depend on a source, Which is Independent and Whose existence

is Necessary and Essential. Therefore, all human beings together with their ,possessions as well as all the other dependent entities

p: ١۶

Tafsīr Surat al-Hamd, pg. ٢٣ -١

Mīzān al-Hikma, v. ٢, pg. ٨٨٧, tr. ۵٧٣٠ -٢

.Ibid -٣

entirely stand and subsist by the cause of Divine Grace. We read on Thursday :(nights(١

يَا دَائِمَ الْفَضْلِ عَل_ى الْبَرِيَّه.

".O One Who continuously Bestows Grace on the creation"

Almighty Allāh is Rabbu'l 'Ālamīn. The meaning of 'Rabb' should not be equated to the word "Lord" as it is normally translated. Rabb – as mentioned by Tafsīr al-Mīzān – means "al-Mālik al-Mudabbir" (The Owner and Manager of affairs), which indicates that Allāh owns every entity in its entirety and manages it by making it subsist and controlling its affairs each and every moment. Thus we should try to remove the irrational thinking of some people who separate God from creation and say that he is .resting. Exalted is He, from such limitations

Therefore if, the soul owner "in the real sense of the word" is Allāh, every human .being is poor and indigent

A Step Towards Eradication of Poverty

On reciting the verse under discussion, the supplicant always imagines, that he or she is praying for all those who are outwardly needy and have no source of stable livelihood. This is also a correct translation of the verse. However, in view of the introduction presented above, we must understand that the dimensions of poverty .are not limited to what we normally imagine

When we pray to Allāh to enrich the poor, we should also have taken a practical step to enrich others to the extent permitted by our limitations. This, as explained .previously, is what is required of us

If we carefully ponder over the verse under discussion, we will realize that the

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Misbāh al-Kaf'amī, section ۴۶, pg. ۶۴۷ -١

supplicant does not merely seek 'the temporal satisfaction' of the needy. Many of us temporarily satisfy the needy in the holy month of Ramadān by purchasing some household necessities, such as food stuffs and clothes, etc. and are pleased for having done something that Almighty Allāh desires. Obviously such acts are highly recommended and carry a lot of benefit, but are different from what we are trying to seek from our All-loving Creator in this particular verse: we are not merely after the temporal satisfaction of the poor; we are praying to Allāh to assist the needy with a permanent source of income. "O Allāh, aghnī (enrich) kulla faqīr (every poor person).

Having realized this subtle point, the supplicant should think of how to play an active role in making the poor affluent. Several examples of how this may be achieved may come to mind. However, each depends on the supplicant's limitation: one who is extremely rich, may think of supporting the poor to start small businesses of their own and enrich them thereby; one who owns a small-scale business and is need of employees, would employ the poor and thereby help them up to a certain extent. One may also be an employee of someone himself, but due to his acquaintance with other wealthy men, would try to intercede on the poor's behalf and get them jobs.

The readers will realize the variety of the options in this noble venture. The significant point here is that every one should take

.a step" and participate"

Historical Examples

The life history of our Holy Prophet (s) and the infallible Imāms (as) are a practical translation of this verse of the du'ā.' Many examples can be cited, but due to the :brevity of this work, we shall only mention a few

Historians have narrated how Imām Hasan al-Mujtabā (as) in all his greatness and .١ magnanimity would help the needy with large amounts of money in one go. It is also narrated of him that thrice during his lifetime the Imām (as) spent half of his wealth on [the needy. [Tārīkh al-Khulafā - Suyūtī

Farazdaq is a well-known character to the lovers of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as). When the .٢ Ummayad governer of the time – Hishām bin 'Abdul Mālik tried to belittle Imām Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn (as) by asking about his identity, Farazdaq recited a beautiful couplet about the exalted character of the Imām (as). This made Hishām very angry and he terminated the continuous help that he used to give Farazdaq and he imprisoned him as well. Imām (as) sent a good amount of money to him in prison, but Farazdaq did not accept it at first. Then the Imām (as) insisted and he finally accepted. Later with the prayer of the Imām (as), when he was released, he informed the Imām (as) of how he was regularly paid by Hishām and that his name was afterwards deleted from Hisham's payroll. Imām (as) thereupon gifted Farazdaq an amount of money that .would suffice him for ۴٠ years

[Farazdaq's life too extended for another ۴۰ years. [al-Manāqib

In his Manāqib, Ibn Shahr Āshūb narrates that Imām Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn (as) took the .۳ [responsibility to cater for ۱۰۰ needy families. [al-Manāqib

Therefore, we should try, through our sadaqāt, to 'eradicate' poverty. One of the best methods of doing so is to gather even very small amounts of support from those who .would like to eradicate poverty and use the same for this sublime purpose

Enriching the Motive of Our Action

There is another significant issue, which must be inculcated in this holy month of grace. When we ask Almighty Allāh to 'enrich all the poor', we should do so because "we ourselves desire it". That is, our untainted disposition yearns for it. At times someone does something and gets happy thereby due to the reward that awaits him. However, sometimes the act in itself is enjoyable for the person. Salāt, for example, to those who are not humble before God is burdensome and difficult. The Holy Qur'ān :[۲:۴۵] says

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلاَةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلاَّ عَلى الْخَاشِعِينَ .

And take recourse in patience and prayer, and that is indeed hard except for the" ".humble

:But one who has cleaned his heart and loves to whisper to the Only Beloved says

قُمْ يا بِلاَلُ فَأَرِحْنَا بِالصَّلاَةِ.

(Stand O Bilāl, and make us happy with prayer."(۱"

:And says

قُرَّةُ عَيْنِى فِى الصَّلاَةِ.

(The delight of my eye (qurratu'aynī) is in prayer."(۲"

There is a vast difference between those who tire themselves in anticipation of Divine

reward and those who tire themselves because they highly enjoy praying to the

p: ۲۰

Mīzān al-Hikma, new ed., v. ۱, pg. ۶۲ -۱

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۸۲, pg. ۱۹۳ -۲

.only Beloved

Therefore, let us struggle to become "extinct in the spirit of Allāh," and practically try to enrich the poor because we naturally enjoy the same; and because it is "our need" .and "our concern". Let us remove the specks of "anticipation" of reward

Readers however should not be led to believe that those who expect reward are sinners. No; rather they enjoy a lower stage, but are good doers and must be encouraged as well. All of us start from this lower step and by Divine succor ascend slowly and gradually. We may easily claim to have ascended to the higher level, but .between 'contention' and 'reality' there can be utter remoteness

O Allāh, Satisfy Every Hungry Person

point

أَللّٰهُمَّ أَشْبِعْ كُلَّ جائِعٍ

Experiencing Hunger

One of the philosophies behind fasting in the holy month of Ramadān is to experience hunger and thereby understand the situation of those who are hungry and cannot afford to feed themselves properly. The following tradition quoted by Mawlā Fayd Kāshānī from Man Lā Yahduruhu'l Faqīh, speaks of the same: in an authentic :narration, Imām al-Sādiq (as), whilst explaining the philosophy of fasting, says

أَرَادَ اللّٰهُ عَزَّ وجَلَّ أنْ يُسَوِّىَ بَيْنَ خَلْقِهِ، وَأَنْ يُذِيقَ الْغَنِىَّ نَيْلَ الْجُوْعِ وَالأَلَمِ، لِيَرِقَّ عَلى الضَّعِيفِ وَيَرْحَمَ الْجَائِعَ.

Allāh, the Exalted and Glorious, desired to maintain equality between His creatures" and make the rich person experience hunger and pain so that he may have pity on the (weak and mercy on the hungry one."(١

Causes of Hunger

Hunger is a widespread problem in today's world and has several causes, which may be classified into two

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al-Mahajjat al-Baydā’, v. ۲, pg. ۱۲۴ -۱

kinds: self-related and external. The source of the self-related causes is the sufferer himself, whereas external causes stem from the society and other natural phenomena. To discuss both these kinds of causes is beyond the scope of this limited .commentary

It is important however to study the limitations of these causes so that we may be able to attempt to avoid or eradicate them altogether. The verse under discussion, as .can be observed clearly, is also closely related to poverty

We had earlier mentioned the fact that every dependent thing stands by Allāh's permission. Hence, if Allāh (swt) does not want one to encounter disasters or be affected by them nothing would happen to him. This universal law, as pointed out .earlier, is not only presented by revelation, but also established by reason

Ensuring Sustenance

Having realized this important truth, let us now look at the following verses of the Holy :Qur'ān

:Chapter al-Ā'rāf - ٧:٩٦ .١

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكَاتٍ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالأَرْضِ... .

And if the people of the towns were to believe and observe piety, surely we would" "...have opened to them the blessings of the heaven and the earth

:Chapter al-Talāq - ٦٥:٢-٣ .٢

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا. وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لاَ يَحْتَسِبُ .

And whosoever is God-wary (observes piety) He would make for him a way out [from" "...difficulties] and Bestow on him sustenance from whence he expects not

:Chapter Nūh - ٧١:١٠-١٢ .٣

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا. يُرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا. وَيُمْدِدْكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَلْ

لَكَمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكَمْ أَنْهَارًا .

Then I said: seek forgiveness from your Lord, [for] indeed He is the Most-forgiving;" He would send down abundance of rain upon you; and aid you with wealth and sons; and make for you gardens and make for you rivers."

These verses inform the human being about the best path of ensuring sustenance and avoiding the calamity of hunger. If the culture of taqwā and istighfār (in its various manifestations and dimensions] were to prevail, hunger would no more be a predicament save in cases of Divine trial.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَىْءٍ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ... .

"And We would certainly try You with somewhat of fear and hunger..."(1)

We also have many traditions that guide the hungry and the destitute, as well those who would like to disseminate the culture of independence, about the ways of achieving sustenance. Following are some examples:

Increasing Sustenance

1. Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said(2):

إِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَزِيدُ فِى الرِّزْقِ.

"Indeed, virtuousness increases sustenance."

2. Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said(3):

حُسْنُ الْخُلْقِ يَزِيدُ فِى الرِّزْقِ.

"Good behaviour (akhlāq) increases sustenance."

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said(4):

دُمْ عَلى الطَّهَارَهِ، يُوَسَّعُ عَلَيْكَ فِى الرِّزْقِ.

"Always be in the state of tahāra (purity) and your sustenance shall be increased."

Therefore, the duty of those who sincerely utter this verse of the supplication, besides actively supporting others, should be to educate them to realize the direct causes of .hunger

The esteemed author of Mir'ātu'l Kamāl, the late Āyatullāh al-Shaykh Māmaqānī has filled six pages full of reasons that cause poverty and

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Holy Qur'ān, ۲:۱۵۵ -۱

Mīzān al-Hikmah, v. ۲ -۲

.Ibid -۳

.Ibid -۴

hamper one's sustenance. References have also come in the gloss of a later edition of this three-volume opus of devotions. Those interested can look at pages ۵۶۹-۵۸۳. :Here, however, we would like to suffice ourselves with mentioning only a few of them

Causes that Hamper Sustenance

Expression of greed, sleeping between maghrib and 'ishā prayers', sleeping between fajr and sunrise, severing relationship with near relatives, sleeping naked for long durations, cursing one's children, eating in the state of lying down, abandoning prayers for one's parents, backbiting, isrāf (over eating, extravagance, etc.), seeking the faults of people, eating while walking, urination and sexual intercourse while facing qibla, urinating on water, laughing excessively especially near graves and gatherings of the learned, not lending money to one who is need, expression of .poverty to one who possesses wealth, and excessive sleep

.Āyatullāh Māmqānī mentions about ۱۷۵ causes in his manual

Therefore, it is essential for us to propagate the culture of taqwā in those poor societies, which can absorb the teachings of Allāh (swt). Taqwā in every dimension of .life enables one to experience happiness in this world as well as the Hereafter

A Deeper Consideration: Another Extension of Food

Food in Qur'ānic terminology does not always refer to material food. Rather, there are clear references made by the Imāms of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) who are the most authoritative commentators of the Qur'ān, that ta'ām (food) in the language of the Qur'ān, sometimes refers to knowledge. It refers to the food of the soul, and not only :that of the body. The following verse is an example

In

:chapter ‘Abasa [۸۰:۲۴], Almighty Allāh says

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الإِنْسَانُ إِلى طَعَامِهِ .

".Then let man look at his food"

About this holy verse, the Shī‘ite commentator Sayyid Hāshim Bahrānī in his Tafsīr al-Burhān quotes a tradition narrated in al-Kāfi [v.۱, p.۳۹, tr.۸] from Imām al-Sādiq (as) as :follows

Zayd al-Shahhām asks Imām (as) what "man's food"(۱) stands for in the verse above. :The Imām (as) responds saying

عِلْمُهُ الَّذِى يأْخُذُهُ عَمَّنْ يَأْخُذُهُ...

(The knowledge that he acquires; from whom does he acquire it?"(۲"

Therefore, if hunger means lack of knowledge many of us are indeed hungry. A scholar who has spent years in acquiring knowledge would also pray to Allāh to bestow on him more and more, for there is no limit to the acquisition of knowledge. The Holy Prophet (s) himself used to seek more knowledge by the following :[supplication that Almighty Allāh taught him in the Holy Qur’ān [۲۰:۱۱۴

وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِى عِلْمًا .

".And say: O my Lord increase me in knowledge"

:And saying

مَا عَرَفْنَاکَ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِکَ.

".We have not known your reality completely"

The solution to this hunger too is taqwā. The following two verses clearly prove this :contention

:Chapter al-Baqarā: ۲:۲۸۲ .۱

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ يُعَلِّمُكَمُ اللَّهُ .

".And adopt taqwā, and Allāh will teach you"

:Chapter al-Anfāl: ۸:۲۹ .۲

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا .

"O believers, if you be God-wary (observe piety) Allāh shall enable you to distinguish the truth from the falsehood."

:Hunger from A Mystical Dimension

The late mystic-scholar as well as teacher of Āyatullāh Khumaynī, Āyatullāh Malikī Tabrīzī in his well-known manual of devotions "al-Murāqibāt"

۱- This interpretation is very apt and accurate, for the reality of the human being is his spirit. Necessarily then, his food would be uniform with his spirit. And this food can be nothing but knowledge.

۲- al-Burhān Fī Tafsīri'l Qur'ān, pg. ۲۱۴

explains the ample benefits of hunger for the spiritual traveler by mentioning some of the following traditions:

١. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

أَفْضَلُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ مَنْزِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، أَطْوَلُكُمْ جُوْعاً وَتَفَكُّراً فِى اللّٰهِ سُبْحَانَهُ.

“The best of you in terms of rank near Allāh on the day of Judgment is the one among you who experiences hunger and engages in contemplation about Allāh, the exalted, for the longest period.”[١]

٢. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have told Usāma:

إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكَ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ وَبَطْنُكَ جَائِعٌ، وَكَبِدُكَ ظَمْآن فَافْعَلْ، فَإِنَّكَ تُدْرِكُ بِذٰلِكَ أَشْرَفَ الْمَنَازِلِ، وَتَحُلُّ مَعَ النَّبِيِّينَ، وَتَفْرَحُ بِقُدُوْمِ رُوْحِكَ الْمَلائِكَةُ، وَ يُصَلِّى عَلَيْكَ الْجَبَّارُ.

“If it is possible for you to encounter the angel of death while you are hungry and thirsty, then do so, for by that you would experience the noblest of stations and reside in the company of the Prophets, and the angels would rejoice in the arrival of your spirit, and God would send His Blessings on you.”[٢]

٣. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

أَجِيْعُوْا أَكْبَادَكُمْ وَأَعْرَوا أَجْسَادَكُمْ، لَعَلَّ قُلُوْبُكُمْ تَرَى اللّٰهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

“Keep your stomachs hungry and afflict your bodies; perhaps [by doing so] your hearts would see Allāh, the Exalted and Glorious.”[٣]

٤. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

مَنْ أَجَاعَ بَطْنَهُ عَظُمَتْ فِكْرَتُهُ.

“Whosoever keeps his stomach hungry would attain sublimity of thought.”[٤]

٥. The Holy Prophet (s) during his mi‘rāj (his ascent to the proximity of God) asks Almighty Allāh:

يَا رَبِّ: مَا مِيْرَاثُ الْجوْعِ؟

"?O Lord what does hunger inherit"

Almighty

p: ٢۶

.al-Murāqibāt, pg. ١۵۴ - New ed -١

.Ibid -٢

.Ibid -٣

Ibid, pg. ١۵۶ -۴

:Allāh says

الْحِكْمَهُ وَحِفْظُ الْقَلْبِ...

(It inherits wisdom and the protection of the heart…”(١“

Therefore, “hunger” has a fundamental role to play in elevating the human being spiritually. However that should not be taken to mean that ‘hunger’ is recommended for all and sundry, including those who cannot withstand it and may fall sick or die. If we look at the book of Islamic laws(٢) at our disposal, we would find that one of the etiquettes of consuming food is to take two meals a day: one meal in the earlier part of the day and the other in the earlier part of the night. The gap between these two meals should not be filled with any other kind of food. Many of us do have the potential to have such a diet, but the forces of desire never allow us to practice it. There are people however, who need more intake of food, and such a diet is out of question for them. Obviously, that does not mean that they are not religious or pious. It is by the intake of food that they can practice their devotions and perform deeds of .virtue and live their lives according to the dictates of Divine law

There comes a time in the life of one who has purified his soul and attained the proximity of Allāh, when he has the ability to withstand hunger not only for short periods but also for unusual intervals. This contention may sound absurd in the language of science and

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Sirru’l Isrā’, v. ١, pg. ١٣ -١

Tawdīhu’l Masā’il of Āyatullāh al-‘Uzmā Sayyid ‘Alī Sīstānī, pg. ۴٩٥ -٢

experiment, but the experts of Islamic esotericism believe that as the spirit of man strengthens, such phenomena are feasible. Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), the great Shī'ite philosopher, who is also known as Sayyid al-'Uqalā' (the doyen of intellectuals) in his monumental "Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt" says:

إِذَا بَلَغَكَ أَنَّ عَارِفاً أَمْسَكَ عَنِ القُوْتِ الْمَرْزُوءِ لَهُ مُدَّةً غَيْرَ مُعْتَادَةٍ، فاسْجَحْ بِالتَّصْدِيْقِ، وَاعْتَبِرْ ذَلِكَ مِنْ مَذَاهِبِ الطَّبِيعَهِ الْمَشْهُوْرَه.

"If you come to know that a Gnostic ('ārif) has refrained for an unusual interval from consuming the little food he has, graciously assent and consider this among the well-known principles of nature."(1)

Therefore, hunger for those who are not deprived of sustenance and are able to withstand it is highly recommended due to the reasons mentioned above.

O Allāh, Clothe Every Unclothed One

point

أَللَّهُمَّ اكْسُ كُلَّ عُرْيَانٍ

The Aim of Human Creation

One of the great calamities of human life is the lack of insight about the purpose of human creation. So long as man has not come to know 'the goal of life' he shall always have to face difficulties. This universal law applies to the affluent too. Ask every wealthy person whether his money always keeps him happy, and his answer would be in the negative. The Holy Qur'ān as well the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) have informed us that the aim behind human creation is to attain Allāh's proximity and nearness. And the path that leads one to realize this aspiration is none other than 'ibādah (obedience and worship). The following verse explains it:

In chapter ٥١, verse ٥۶, Almighty Allāh says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالإِنْسَ إِلاَّ لِيَعْبُدُونِ

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al–Ishārāt wa ‘ l–Tanbīhāt, v. ۴, pg. ۱۱۱ –۱

”.And I have not created the jinn and men except that they should worship Me“

Here, the aim is indicated as Allāh’s Worship. But is it the ‘final aim of creation?’ To :answer this we should look at chapter ١٥, verse ٩٩ of the Qur’ān, which says

وَاعْــبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ .

”.And worship your Lord until conviction comes to you“

Therefore, it is ma‘rifatullāh that is the end. And the closer one gets to his Lord the .better his knowledge of his Creator

Beautiful allusions are made in the following verses too about the ultimate goal of the :human being

١. Imām ‘Alī (as) in his famous supplication of Kumayl cries:

يَا غَايَةَ آمَالِ العَارِفِــينَ!

”.O the Ultimate Hope of the Gnostics“

٢. And in the prayer of ‘Arafah, Sayyid al-Shuhadā (as) cries:

إِلٰهِي: أُطْلُبْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ حَتّى أَصِلَ إِلَيْكَ.

”.O Allāh, Seek me by Your Mercy until I reach You“

It is Allāh’s worship that raises the human being so high that he may witness God- of .(course in his own limitations as explained by some traditions of the Ahlu’l Bayt (as

Having known this, we should realize that since the human being resides in the world of matter and possesses a structure that is submissive to the laws of matter, he is in need of different necessities that may enable him to subsist and achieve his goal in life. Examples of such basic necessities, which we may also term as ‘the means of life’, .are food, drink, clothing, a place of shelter, etc

The Means and the Goal

Many who have not realized the purpose

p: ۲۹

of human life busy themselves with the means and forget the goal. When they look at the luster of the various kinds of material products of the so-called developed countries, they brand that as 'human progress' and even try to doubt the authenticity of Islam. Advancement in science and technology is not something abhorred by Islam at all. Rather it is encouraged. However it still comes under the umbrella of 'the means of the end' and thus one should not mistake it as 'the yardstick of human progress.' One should rather question oneself whether 'the material product' really serves to be 'means' on the path towards Allāh or not. Both the VCR and the Internet, for example, are helpful means of communication, but if they hamper the human being from traversing the path of eternal happiness, what use do they have in serving as 'a means' for the goal? The proponents of advancement always present two kinds of :products

Those of variable nature .۱

Those of invariable nature .۲

Commodities of the first category allow the human being to reason and work on the path towards perfection both before and after purchase. For example, when buying a television set, one may or may not decide to employ the same in watching only those programs that would enrich his mind and spirit. In the case of the second category, however, 'this choice' is out of question 'after purchase.' For example, if a person .were to purchase an indecent film due to his base inclinations

Later if he were to decide to employ the same for a good purpose, he would not be able to do so. He cannot change the film to enrich his mind. All he can do is to erase the film and dub something that would enrich his spirit. Similar is the case with material items that directly concern human development and subsistence such as food, drink and clothing. Many kinds of food and clothing are forbidden is Islam and .can thus not be branded as 'the means' for the human goal

Therefore it is highly significant to know the difference between 'the goal' and the 'means.' Many of us unfortunately have molded our lives to struggle only for the abundance of the means and have forgotten the goal. We would understand this :reality when entering our graves. The Qur'ān [١٠٢: ١-٢] says

.أَلْهَاكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ. حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ .

".Competing for abundance has engaged you until you come to the graves"

The Purpose Behind Clothing

Clothing' is one of the very basic necessities of human life and indeed a blessing of' Allāh (swt) to the human being. Realizing the purpose behind clothing would open several doors of understanding and enable us to do our duty while requesting the All-.merciful Lord to clothe all the naked

:Following are verses of Qur'ān and supplications worthy of contemplation

:[Chapter al-Ā'rāf -٧:٢۶] .١

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُوَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَى ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ... .

O children of Adam, surely we have sent down for you clothing that covers your" shame and

"...an attire that causes beauty; and the attire of piety; that is better"

٢. Imām Mūsā bin Ja'far al-Kāzim (as) is reported(١) to have said that whenever a person would like to put on a new dress he should wipe his hand over it and say:

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِى كَسَانِى مَا أُوَارِى بِهِ عَوْرَتِى وَأَتَجَمَّلُ بِهِ فِى النَّاسِ.

"Praise belongs to Allāh who clothed me with what I cover my shame and beautify myself among the people."

Studying the abovementioned quotations we come to realize that two important reasons behind clothing are:

١. To conceal one's private parts

٢. To beautify oneself

The Inner Attire

Having spoken about this great blessing, Almighty Allāh transports the reader to a very important truth, which if neglected would cause extreme regret. He reminds the human being that he is not just composed of the material body to need 'the material attire' only. Rather 'the inner attire' is of fundamental significance. In the words of Qur'ān: dhālika khayr (that is the better!) 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī in his al-Mizān has a beautiful explanation about this. In order to indicate the gravity of the situation of 'the pain' that the human being experiences when his shameful deeds are displayed, he says:

...إِلَّا أَنَّ ظُهُورَ السَوْءَاتِ البَاطِنِيَّهِ أَشَدُّ...

"...except that the pain experienced with the appearance of the inner blemishes is more intense..."

Other verses of the Holy Qur'ān clearly explain the calamity of this situation. Look at the verses below:

١. Chapter al-Tāriq: ٨٦:٩ -

يَوْمَ تُبْلَــى السَّرَآئِرُ .

".The day when the secrets shall be made manifest"

Chapter Āli .۲

Hilyatu'l Muttaqīn, ch. ۹ -۱

:Imrān - ۳:۳۰‘

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا... .

On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has“ ”...done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that evil was a long distance

:Chapter Āli ‘Imrān, ۳:۱۹۲ .۳

رَبَّـنَا إِنَّکَ مَنْ تُدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ .

”...O Lord, surely whomsoever you place in the Fire, you have indeed disgraced him“

Therefore when uttering this verse of the supplication we should try to think whether we are among those who are spiritually unclothed or not. If we are, then we should seek Divine help to establish taqwā within ourselves so that we do not face that .ignominy which is so intense to bear

The other fundamental use of clothing is to look presentable and beautiful. The inclination to be beautiful is inherent in every human being and there are ample indications in our holy traditions that encourage one to look beautiful and presentable within the limits of the Sharī’a. In keeping with the brevity of this commentary, we will .avoid mentioning them

However, we must understand that in the same manner as “taqwā” and piety is a source of protection from sin and ignominy, it also is a source of embellishment. This is because it embellishes the inner form of the human being with excellent character and makes him the beloved of Allāh. How remote is the ‘beloved of the apparently ’beautiful

from the beloved of the spiritually beautiful: razaqanallāhu jamī'an [May Allāh enable [all of us to achieve the same

A Word of Prayer

O Allāh, as we humbly ask you to clothe both the physically as well as the spiritually naked ones, and seek your support to help those who have no proper clothes in their physical lives, and enable us to clothe our inner selves with the attire of taqwā, so that .we may acquire the worth to clothe others as well

O Allāh, Facilitate the Payment of Every Indebted One

point

أَللّٰهُمَّ اقْضِ دَيْنَ كُلِّ مَدِيْنٍ

'The Comprehensive Meaning of 'dayn

Many might imagine that 'dayn' (debt) is the same as 'qard' (loan). In the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence, however, the word dayn has a broader connotation then the word 'qard.' Dayn also covers qard in its conceptual umbrella. Āyatullāh Makārim Shīrāzī in his Tafsīr-e Namūne alludes to this subtlety and says that qard is only applied when one is obliged to return the equivalent of the thing taken; for example, if he takes money as a loan, he would have to return the same amount of money; and if he takes a certain kind of food, he would be obliged to return the same. However, 'dayn' has a broader framework, for it includes any kind of transaction such as ('settlement of claim' (sulh), leasing (ijāra), buying and selling, and the like.(١)

Debt Sometimes Hampers One From Spiritual Progress

Debt at times becomes a very great impediment on the path towards God. The reason for this is that it preoccupies one's mind and heart, and that is a decisive factor in impeding progress. Look at the

١- Āstāne Qudse Radawī, Sharho Tafsīre Lughāte Qur’ān, Bar Asāse Tafsīre Namūne,
pg.٧٠

following traditions:

۱. Imām Zaynu’l ‘Ābidīn (as) in his beautiful supplication(۱) for relief from debt informs his followers of the difficult situation that a debtor normally experiences. Look at the following:

O God,

bless Muhammad and his Household

and release me from a debt

which makes me lose face,

confuses my mind,

disrupts my thinking,

and prolongs my occupation with attending to it!

I seek refuge in You, my Lord,

from worry and thought about debt,

from the distraction and sleeplessness of debt;

so bless Muhammad and his Household

and give me refuge from it!

I seek sanctuary in You, my Lord, from

debt’s abasement in life

and its ill effects after death...

۲. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said(۲):

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالدَّيْنَ! فَإِنَّهُ هَمٌّ بِاللَّيلِ، وَذُلٌّ بِالنَّهارِ.

Beware of debt, for surely it causes grief during the night and humiliation during the“ ”.day

Another obvious case that can hamper the indebted one from spiritual development is when he is indifferent to repaying his debt: following are traditions worthy of :contemplation

:Imām Ja’far al-Sādiq (as) is reported(٣) to have said .١

أَيُّمَا رَجُلٌ أَتَى رَجُلًا فَاسْتَقْرَضَ مِنْهُ مَالاً وَفِى نِيَّتِهِ أَنْ لَّا يُؤَدِّيَهُ، فَذٌلِكَ اللّصُّ الْعَادِّى.

Whosoever comes to a person and takes some money as a loan from him while he“ ”.has the intention of not paying him back is a common thief

:Imām Ja’far al-Sādiq (as) is reported(۴) to have said .٢

مَنْ اسْتَدَانَ دَيْنًا فَلَمْ يَنْوِ قَضاءَهُ، كَانَ بِمِنْزِلَهِ السَّارِقِ.

”.Whosoever takes a loan and has no intention to pay it back, is the same as a thief“

In the above traditions such people are termed as thieves. Essentially then, the very

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Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyya, Supg. no. ٣٠ -١

Mīzān al-Hikma, v. ٢, pg. ٩۵٨ -٢

Wasāi’l al-Shī‘a ilā Tahsīli Masā’il al-Sharī‘a, v. ١٨, pg. ٣٢٩ -٣

Ibid, v. ١٨, pg. ٣٢٨ -۴

.notion of ‘spiritual progress’ is far-fetched for them

Those who are regularly habituated in taking loans from here and there should also realize the dangerous consequences that await them. Traditions of the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) :have alluded to some such dangers as follows

:(Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said(١ .١

كَثْرَةُ الدَّيْنِ تُصَيِّرُ الصَّادِقَ كَاذِبَاً، وَالْمُنْجِزَ مُخْلِفاً.

Excess of debt turns the truthful one into a liar and one who fulfills [his promises] to“ ”.become unfaithful

:Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) is reported(٢) to have said .٢

كُلُّ ذَنْبٍ يُكَفِّرُهُ القَتْلُ فِى سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إلاَّ الدَّيْنَ، لاَ كَفَّارَهَ لَهُ إِلاَّ أَدَاؤهُ، أَوْ يَقْضِى صَاحِبُهُ، أَوْ يَعْفُو الَّذِى لَهُ الحَقُّ.

Martyrdom in Allāh’s way expiates every sin, save debt, for it has no compensation“ save its repayment, or payment by the inheritor (sāhibuhu) or forgiveness from the ”...creditor

:(Imām Ja’far al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said(٣ .٣

خَفِّفُوْا الدَّيْنَ، فَإِنَّ فِى خِفَّهِ الدَّيْنِ زِيَادَةَ العُمُرِ.

”.Lessen your debts, for surely in the reduction of your debts is the increment of life“

?When Should One Take a Loan

These above traditions should not be mistaken to mean that one has no right to take any loan whatsoever. Rather, in times of difficulty believers are allowed to take loans within the framework of Islamic laws. The Infallible progeny of the Holy Prophet (s) also took loans during their lifetime. But that which is very important is to understand properly the correct circumstance of taking a loan. A substantial number of people take loans to live a life of leisure or extravagance. So long as the believer has not

Ghuraru'l Hikam Wa Duraru'l Kalim, pg. ۳۶۸ -۱

Wasāi'l al-Shī'a ilā Tahsīli Masā'il al-Sharī'a, v. ۱۸, pg. ۳۲۴ -۲

Mizān al-Hikma, v. ۲, pg. ۹۵۸ -۳

learnt to observe an Islamic discipline, he would always have to live a life of hardship. Imām Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn (as) teaches his followers in supplication ۳۰ of the Sahīfah al-Sajjādiyyah to adopt some sublime traits in order to avoid debt and be freed from the :same. Look at the following

,O God

bless Muhammad and his Household

,prevent me from extravagance and excess

,put me on the course of generous spending and moderation

,teach me excellent distribution

,hold me back through Your gentleness from squandering

,allow me to attain my provisions through lawful means

,direct my spending toward the gateways of devotion

and take away from me any possession

,which will bring forth pride in me

,lead to insolence

!or drag me in its heels to rebellion

,O God

make me love the companionship of the poor

!and help me be their companion with excellent patience

Whenever you take away from me

,the goods of this perishing world

!store them for me in Your abiding treasuries

Make this world's broken pieces

which You have conferred upon meand its goods

which You have quickly granted to me

,a way to reach Your neighborhood

,a link to Your nearness

!and a means to Your Garden

,Verily You are Possessor of bounty abounding

.and You are the Munificent, the Generous

So beautifully has the Imām informed his followers about the causes of their wretched state of debt. Every point in the above supplication is a gateway of understanding. [Readers are requested to reflect on each of the verses above to .[decipher the causes

The wealthy believers, on the other hand, are highly encouraged to give loans to their needy brothers and

sisters and assist them in times of hardship. In fact some holy traditions clearly tell us that the reward one gets by giving qard exceeds the reward a person gets by giving sadaqah, although in the case of the latter no return is anticipated, whereas in the case of the former the lender does expect return. Following are traditions worthy of reflection:

١. Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said(١):

مَكْتُوْبٌ عَلَى بَابِ الْجَنَّهِ: إِنَّ الصَّدَّقَهَ بِالْعَشَرهِ، وَالْقَرْضُ الْوَاحِدُ بِثَمَانِيَهَ عَشرَه...

"The following has been written on the door of Paradise: Surely sadaqah equals ten times [reward], and one loan equals to eighteen times [reward]..."

٢. Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said(٢):

مَنْ أَقْرَضَ مُؤْمِنًا قَرْضاً يَنْظُرُ بِهِ مَيْسُوْرَهُ كَانَ مَـالُهُ فِىْ زَكَاهٍ، وَكَانَ هُوَ فِى صَلاهٍ مِنَ الْمَلائِكَهِ حَتَّى يُؤَدِّيَهُ.

"Whosoever gives a loan to a mu'min, expecting his ease thereby, his wealth would increase and the angels would invoke blessings on him until he is paid."

Shaykh Bahā'ī and the Du'ā' of Relief From Debt

In his well-known masterpiece of commentary of ٤٠ traditions (al-Arba'ūna Hadīthan), Shaykh Bahā'ī relates an interesting incident that he had experienced after quoting the following tradition:

The esteemed Shaykh al-Sadūq Muhammad bin Bābaway al-Qummī has narrated with his chain of narrators from Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) who narrated the same from his fathers (as), who narrated from Amīru'l Mu'minīn (as) who said:

I complained to the Prophet (s) about a loan that I had on my shoulders, and he (s) said:

O 'Alī say:

أَللُّهُمَّ أَغْنِنِى بِحَلاَلِكَ عَنْ حَرَامِكَ، وَبِفَضْلِكَ عَمَّنْ سِوَاكَ.

O Allāh: Make me needless of that“

p: ۳۸

Mir’ātu’l Kamāl, pg. ۱۴۶ -۱

Wasāi’l al-Shī‘a ilā Tahsīli Masā’il al-Sharī‘a, v. ۱۸, pg. ۳۳۰ -۲

which you have made unlawful through that which you have made lawful, and [make me needless] of other than you by Your Favor."

Thereafter Shaykh Bahā'ī narrates: "During some years of my life I was so much in debt, that the amount I had to pay exceeded ۱۵۰۰ mithqāls of gold and the lenders were highly persistent is getting their money back. So difficult had the situation become that it diverted me from many of my occupations, and I had no solution in repaying them. So I adhered to reciting the above supplication, and would repeat it after every Morning Prayer, and at times would also recite the same after other prayers. Consequently, Allāh, the Exalted, made it easy for me to pay the loans off quickly in a very short time through unknown sources."(۱)

Obligations

This verse of the noble supplication creates different obligations for different people:

۱. Those who have the ability to relieve others from any of the kinds of debt should attempt to do so. A generous moneylender, having realized the faithfulness and inability of the debtor, may forgive him (partly or entirely) and thereby practically and faithfully translate this verse of the supplication.

۲. Those who have the capacity of relieving themselves from debt in any of the situations in which they have been trapped, should try hard to do so, otherwise it would be an unfaithful cry on their part. How greedy would it be for one who has ample money to give but waits for help and prays

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۱- al-Arba'ūna Hadīthan, pg. ۲۴۳

!for external support

3. Muslim societies who have a united system can solve this grave problem of debt in its different manifestations very quickly by the collection of even very small contributions from individuals.

An In–depth Consideration

The supplications that the Infallible Imāms (as) have taught us are very rich in content, but they require 'a broad vision' to be appreciated. In many places we have stressed, albeit indirectly, the importance of the inner content of every verse. Here too, we think it is important to mention the same:

One of the significant laws that prevail the world of language is that words are coined for the spirit of their meanings. This is contrary to what some conjecture when saying that words are coined for their 'material extensions (masādīq)' and not 'the spirit of their meanings.' They mean to say for example, the word 'balance' only refers to the conventional balance that we are aware of. Clearly, this is not correct, for the examples of balance are not be limited to those instruments of balance that measure material entities. The Holy Qur'ān is also known as mīzān (balance). The personality of Imām 'Alī (as) is another extension of balance, for the believers are judged and weighed according to his spirit. Most of the learned scholars believe that words are coined for the spirit of their meanings and not necessarily their material extensions. For further research on this subtle subject, one may refer to the introduction of al-Mīzān of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī and the first chapter of the

treatise of 'Encounter with God' by Āyatullāh Malikī Tabrīzī - the well-known Shī'ite .saint

Āyatullāh Malikī Tabrīzī says: "...Besides, according to what has been researched, words have been coined for the spirit of their meanings and the particulars of the meanings have nothing to do with the ['spirit of' the] meaning; for example the word mīzān (balance) has been coined for a thing by means of which other things are measured, but the particularity of having two sides of the scale or the rest of the particularities of a conventional scale has nothing to do with the meaning [for which the word was actually coined]. Thus using the word 'balance' to denote the different types and kinds of balances that have been invented, would signify 'correct usage' and employing a word to denote the meaning for which it was coined. Therefore, the meaning for which the word mīzān was coined is 'a measuring instrument' regardless of any specifics, neither of the 'instrument' nor 'the object measured.' Nowadays the instruments that measure the heat and temperature of the body and air as well as those that measure the blood temperature, the speed of vehicles, and a variety of other measuring instruments which number perhaps in hundreds or even thousands, all are the meanings of the word 'mīzān', and employing the word mīzān for them would be the correct usage. Likewise is the case with other general words such as (path (sirāt), light (nūr), reward (thawāb), punishment ('iqāb), etc."(۱

Realizing this, we should try

Risāleye Liqā'ullāh -۱

to look at the ‘spirit’ of the meaning of ‘dayn’ so that we can decipher the variety of its .examples and try to emancipate ourselves from them accordingly

According to Mu’jam Maqā’īs al-Lugha, a comprehensive dictionary of Arabic words, the root word of dayn (d-y-n) means ‘submission’ (inqiyād) and ‘surrender.’ All the derivatives of the word (dāl-ye-nūn) reveal a kind of ‘submission’ and ‘slavery.’ Debt in one way enslaves the debtor and binds him or her until he or she relieves himself or herself from the same. The following sayings of Imām ‘Alī (as) are worthy of :reflection

١. Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said(١):

الدَّيْنُ رِقٌّ، والْقَضاءُ عِتْقٌ.

“Debt is slavery and payment is freedom.”

٢. Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said(٢):

الدَّيْنُ أَحَدُ الرِّقَّيْنِ.

“Debt is one of the two kinds of slavery.”

٣. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said(٣):

لَا تَزَالُ نَفْسُ الْمُؤْمِنِ مُعَلَّقَةً مَا كَانَ عَلَيْهِ دَيْنٌ.

“The spirit of a believer remains suspended as long as he has a debt on him.”

When we take a loan, we are in fact enslaved until we free ourselves by repaying it. .Likewise is the case with regard to all the extensions of debt

Those acts which Almighty Allāh expects from every human being are likewise examples of ‘dayn’; therefore, the human being should try to perform them so that they have nothing on their shoulders. In the following radiant tradition, Salāt is :considered to be an extension of dayn

:Imām Ja’far al-Sādiq (as) narrates(۴) Hadrat Luqmān as saying

إِذَا جَاءَ وَقْتُ الصَّلَاهِ فَلَا تُؤَخِّرْهَا

p: ۴۲

۱- Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim, pg. ۳۶۸

۲- Ibid.

۳- Wasāi'l al-Shī'a ilā Tahsīli Masā'il al-Sharī'a, v. ۱۸, pg. ۳۱۷

۴- Wasāi'l al-Shī'a ilā Tahsīli Masā'il al-Sharī'a

لِشَيءٍ: صَلِّهَا وَاسْتَرِحْ، فَإِنَّهَا دَيْنٌ.

"When the time of prayer comes, do not delay the prayer for something else; pray and take rest, for verily it is a debt (dayn)."

O Allāh, Relieve Every Deeply Anguished One

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أَللَّهُمَّ فَرِّجْ عَنْ كُلِّ مَكْرُوْبٍ

Meaning of 'Makrūb'

Makrūb is an object noun whose origin is the verbal noun 'karb' meaning 'deep anguish.' 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī in his al-Mīzān quotes Rāghib Isfahānī, the famous lexicographer of Qur'ānic words, as saying[1]:

الْكَرْبُ الغَمُّ الشَّدِيْدُ.

"Karb means deep anguish."

The word Karbalā', for example, is a composition of 'intense grief' (karb) and 'trial' (balā').

Therefore, in short, 'makrūb' is one who suffers deep sorrow and anguish.

The Source of Anguish

In this verse we are humbly asking Allāh (swt) to lift the state of deep anguish from all 'the deeply anguished and sorrowful.' And whosoever seeks the relief of the anguished also seeks the elimination of the causes that create anguish. We should, however, realize that the sources of anguish vary with different people and different circumstances. Those who enjoy the proximity of Allāh, despite having no grief for loss of the world and its pleasures:

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَآءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ .

"Surely, the friends of Allāh neither fear nor grieve." [Holy Qur'ān, ١٠:٦٢]

experience deep anguish for the disbelievers due to the consequences they would :have to face in future

فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُکَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرَاتٍ .

And therefore do not consume yourself for them due to grief [of their unbelief]..."..." [[Holy Qur'ān, ۳۵:۸

Āyatullāh Khumaynī in his well-known Forty Traditions (Chehl Hadith) says: "... whoever perceives the greatness and glory of the Lord to

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al-Mīzān, v. ۷, pg. ۱۳۴ -۱

a greater extent and knows the sacred station of God Almighty more than others, suffers more and is tormented to a greater extent by the sins of the creatures and their offences against the Lord's sanctity. Also, one who has a greater love and compassion for the creatures of God is tormented to a greater extent by their crooked and wretched condition and ways. And, of course, the Seal of the Prophets (s) was more perfect in all these stations and higher than all the prophets and the awliyā' (those near to God) in respect of his degree of excellence and perfection. Hence, his torment and suffering was greater than that of any one of them..."

Sometimes the source of grief is different. For example, with regard to Prophet Ayyūb (as) we say the following(1) in one of the supplications of the Holy month of Ramadān:

يَا مُلَيِّنَ الْحَدِيدِ لِدَاوُوْدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامِ! يَا كَاشِفَ الْكُرَبِ الْعِظَامِ عَنْ أَيُّوْبَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام!

"O Softner of Iron for Dāwūd, upon whom be peace. O Reliever of great sorrows from Ayyūb, upon whom be peace."

This indicates that Prophet Ayyūb had suffered major calamities during his lifetime. Perhaps the following tradition explains this better:

'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm, in a long tradition, narrates on the authority of Abū Basīr that Imām al-Sādiq (as) said: "...Then his [Prophet Ayyūb (as)'s] whole body, except his intellect and his eyes, was subjected to the disease. Then Iblis blew upon it and it became a single wound extending from his head to feet. He

1- Iqbāl al-A'māl, v. ۱, pg. ۳۶۴

Job) remained for a period in that condition, praising and thanking God, until his body) became infested with worms. Whenever a worm fell off his body, he would put it back, saying to it, “Return to your place, from where God created you.” And it began to stench until his townsfolk expelled him from his town and his food came from the (garbage thrown outside the town.”(١)

With regard to Prophet Nūh (as) also, ‘intense grief’ has been mentioned. Look at the :following verse

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نـــَادَى مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ .

And Nūh, when he cried aforetime, so We answered him, and delivered him and his“ [followers from the great anguish.” [Holy Qur’ān, ٢١:٧۶

Exegetes of the Qur’ān have different interpretations for the source of this grief. Some like Tabarsī in his Majma‘ al-Bayān surmise that it refers to the disturbance of his people, whereas Mawlā Kāshānī says that it may refer to both that and to the .great flood

Some sources of grief, however, spring from weakness of faith and a deep attachment to the world: because a person does not have the luxuries of life that others seem to enjoy, you may find him suffering grief. Those who commit suicide due to intense grief and sorrow do so due to lack of patience or even an ‘aim’ in life. .Hence, every makrūb is not the same

The supplicant therefore should bear in mind the different causes of sorrow and anguish and sincerely pray to Allāh to eliminate

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Narrated by Āyatullāh Khumaynī in his ۴٠ traditions -١

them accordingly. For example, with regard to one who is distressed due to lack of the additional pleasures of the world, one must pray that he is emancipated from the love of the world. The person who is in a state of utter poverty should pray that his needs are covered so that he may engage in his daily affairs and devotion with peace of mind; the one who suffers a cancerous ailment should yearn for his relief from it, so that he may live in peace and derive the utmost benefit of doing good in life and .thereby build his Hereafter

Remembering the Anguished of Today

To keep abreast with the contemporary history of the world may seem to be insignificant for some: what can I do, for example, if others are dying of starvation in Afghanistan? I have no means to attend to them and thus it makes no difference .whether I know about their awful state or not

Clearly, such thinking stems from a narrow outlook. The human being enjoys a disposition that yearns for the salvation of every other human being. Therefore indifference is an alien concept to his nature. 'Not being able to help the oppressed' .does not necessitate indifference on our part

Firstly, our natural conscience would like to know the situation of those of our .brethren who are suffering throughout the world

Secondly, if we are materially unable, Almighty Allāh has opened the door of prayer .for us. Through prayers for the destitute, things can really change

Thirdly, there are so many things

that we can do together to crush the power of the world arrogance, but we do not realize the same. Our businessmen who import goods from countries like Israel and buy them at relatively low costs, can stop such transactions, so that they may not indirectly take part in killing the innocent Palestinians. Many of us indirectly promote the commodities that the world arrogance produces. If we were to boycott such products, these groups would never be as materially prosperous as they are. Today, if the Arab leaders were to wake up and stop bowing in front of the world arrogance, a .great transformation can take place

Individual Responsibility

But what is my duty as an individual when I recite this verse of the radiant supplication? Most of us enjoy a certain limit of power and can play an effective role accordingly. Therefore let us measure the power that we have at our disposal, and practically take steps to relieve those anguished and distressed people that we can support. For we are not obliged to do what is beyond our capacity. The Holy Qur'ān :[al-Baqara - ۲:۲۸۶] says

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْساً إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا .

"...Allāh does not oblige a soul save to the extent of its capacity"

Thus if I can support a particular family and remove it from the state of sorrow, I should do so. If I am the president of a certain society, and can remove the sorrow of those who are disturbed by the 'disorganization of the social setup' I

should do so by organization. The list goes on. The extensions are identified according to the power every supplicant has. Otherwise, uttering this radiant verse of the supplication would mean nothing but the mere movement one’s tongue, or the expression of one’s hypocrisy; may Allāh save us from such ignominy!

Instilling Happiness in the Hearts of Believers

Removing anguish from the heart of a believer and instilling happiness in him is one of the significant subjects that our books of tradition have extensively covered. Following are traditions worthy of reflection:

١. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported(١) to have said:

مَنْ سَرَّ مُؤْمِنًا فَقَدْ سَرَّنِى، وَمَنْ سَرَّنِى فَقَدْ سَرَّ اللّٰهَ.

“Whoever makes a believer happy has indeed made me happy; and whosoever has made me happy has indeed made Allāh happy.”

٢. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported(٢) to have said:

إِنَّ فِى الْجَنَّهِ داراً يُقَالُ لَهَا دَارُ الْفَرَحِ، لاَ يَدْخُلُهَا إلاَّ مَنْ فَرَّحَ يَتامَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ.

“Surely, there is a place in Paradise called ‘the House of Joy’; none would enter therein save one who made the believers among the orphans happy.”

Recommended States of Anguish

Some states of anguish are highly recommended. They can be gateways toward prosperity and peace. True repentance and regret is one such state:

Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported(٣) to have said:

سُرُوْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِ بِطَاعَهِ رَبِّهِ، وَحُزْنُهُ عَلَى ذَنْبِهِ.

“The happiness of a believer is in his obedience and his grief is due to his sin.”

In fact, repentance is a fundamental condition from among the six conditions of

:istighfār enumerated by Imām ‘Alī (as) in Nahju’l Balāgha. Imām (as) says

...أَوَّلُهَا النَّدَمُ عَلَى مَا مَضَى...

The first [condition of“

Mīzān al-Hikma, v. ۲., pg. ۱۲۹۱, ۸۴۶۵ -۱

Ibid., v. ۲., pg. ۱۲۹۱, tr. ۸۴۶۰ -۲

Ibid., v. ۲, pg. ۱۲۹۱, tr. ۸۴۵۵ -۳

”.[istighfār] is regret about the past [misdeeds

:The Holy Qur’ān [۳:۱۳۵] says

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ... .

And those when they commit an indecency or oppress themselves, remember Allāh“ ”?and seek forgiveness of their sins; and who can forgive a sin save Allāh

In his Tafsīr al-Sāfī, Mawlā Fayd Kāshānī in the exegesis of this verse narrates (۱) the :following incident

Observing brevity here we would not mention all the details of the incident, but try to] [.mention the salient points only

Once during the time of the Holy Prophet (s) a youth called Bahlūl came in the presence of the Holy Prophet (s) while intensely weeping. The Holy Prophet (s) asked him why he was weeping, and he said that he had committed very great sins, such that if Allāh (swt) were to punish him for only some of them, he would enter the Hell Fire. Then the Holy Prophet (s) asks him some questions and the youth answers the Prophet (s). At one point the conversation reaches a climax and the Holy Prophet (s) asks the youth: ‘Is there anyone save The Very Great who would forgive the very great sin? The youth says: ‘No, I swear by Allāh.’ Then the Holy Prophet (s) asks him to :inform him one of his sins. The youth then narrates his story as follows

I used to dig graves for seven years; I would remove the dead, and disrobe them. Once it so happened that a

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Tafsīr al-Sāfī, v. ۱, pp. ۳۸۲-۳۸۴ -۱

lady from the Ansār died. After she was carried to her grave and buried, her family left the place; then the night came to pass. I neared her grave, dug it, and removed her out; thereafter I unshrouded her and left her naked near the grave; and started to leave. Suddenly, Satan came in my mind and began attracting me to her. By this, I returned back and lacking self-control committed the vile deed with her. Then I took off leaving her in that state. Suddenly I heard a voice from behind which said: O youth, woe be upon you from the Judge of the Day of Judgment, the day when He shall make me and you stand in the naked state that you left me among the dead, and took me out from my grave and removed my shroud from me and left me to stand in the state of impurity... So woe be upon you. Narrating this, the youth said: Therefore I do not think that I shall ever smell the scent of Paradise.

Hearing all this the Prophet (s) said: Be away from me O sinner; I am afraid I would burn by your Fire; how near are you from the Fire! The youth then left the noble presence of the Holy Prophet (s) and went to Medina where he took some provisions and left for one of its mountains; there he tied his hands onto his neck and started supplicating and seeking forgiveness and weeping and

repenting. He did this for forty days and nights. It is said that the animals around him also wept for him. When forty days and nights were over, he raised his hands towards the sky and cried: 'O Allāh, what have you done about my wish? If you have accepted my supplication and forgiven my fault then inform the Holy Prophet (s) through revelation about the same; and if not, then quickly send down a fire that would burn me, or a punishment in this world that would vanquish me, and emancipate me from humiliation of the Day of Resurrection. Upon this, Almighty Allāh sends the .[abovementioned verse [٣:١٣٥

After the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet (s) goes to the place where the youth was weeping in forgiveness. [The sad scenario makes one really weep. We have omitted it here to observe brevity]. The Holy Prophet (s) nears the youth and tells him: "I give you glad tidings [from Allāh] you are a freed slave of Allāh from the fire

.O Allāh, Return Every Stranger

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أَللَّهُمَّ رُدَّ كُلَّ غَرِيْبٍ

'Meaning of 'Gharīb

Due to an acquaintance with different cultures and languages some of us conjecture that the word 'gharīb' means 'poor.' In the Urdu language, however, this word when used in the absolute sense denotes the poverty of a person. But when it is .particularized like 'gharību'l watan' the meaning changes

In the Arabic, which appears also to be the source language of the word, 'gharīb' means 'a remote entity.' Its origin is the word 'ghurba' which means

.remoteness.' Any thing therefore which is gharīb is far'

:In his Commentary of Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah(١), Sayyid 'Alī Khān al-Husaynī, says

الْغُرْبَهُ بالضمّ: البُعْدُ والنَّوَى.

".Ghurbah (with the vowel damma over ghayn) denotes remoteness and distance"

.[Hence gharīb is anything that is far [in relation to something else

.In the Arabic language, unknown words are also known as gharīb

The pain of being a stranger can be well appreciated by only those who have experienced, or are experiencing the state of being far from their hometowns. Whosoever travels abroad, has hope of returning back to his hometown safe and sound. Obviously, he would not like to separate himself from his near ones or abandon his material assets of life. Those who have left their hometowns and encountered calamities on their way or were stranded in a foreign country can .understand how agonizing it is to be far from home

The recent decades of contemporary history are full of examples that break the heart of every concerned listener: the Zionists, as has been their trend in the ancient past, continue harassing different parts of the weak nations of the world through terrorism and banishment, and thereby drive out scores of innocent men, women and children from their hometowns so that they should bear the painful torture of surviving in .refugee camps

Such innocent victims are really in need of our support. As mentioned earlier, we must try to study the areas where we can play an effective role to support them in any way. If donations are collected by reliable

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Riyād al-Sālikīn, v. ١, pg. ۴۷۳ -١

aid organizations, we should try to contribute as much as we can. If we can help a refugee who lives in poverty in our countries, we should strive to support him, so that he may adapt to the new situation he has been forced into. If we are unable to do all this, we should never forget to pray for them and seek their relief from the All-Powerful Creator.

Therefore, when we pray to Allāh to return all those who are far away from their hometowns and cannot return due to some difficulties, we should not forget the manifestations of such people in contemporary history; we are duty bound to remember all those who suffer the predicament of banishment such as the Palestinians, the Afghanis, etc.

Extensions of Ghurba

It is possible for one to be a foreigner somewhere, but enjoy a very luxurious life. Consequently one may or may not experience the agony of separation. Those to whom Allāh has bestowed affluence do not necessarily experience the agony of separation. The means of communication are easily at their disposal and they have no sense of grief, for whenever they choose to return back they do not face any problems. The following holy tradition alludes to this reality:

Imām 'Alī (as) is reported(١) to have said:

الْغَنِيُّ فِی الْغُرْبَهِ وَطِنٌ.

"The affluent one is at home in a foreign place."

Poverty, on the contrary, transforms one into a stranger:

Imām 'Alī (as) is reported(٢) to have said:

الْفَقْرُ فِی الْوَطَنِ غُرْبَهٌ.

"Poverty in one's town is remoteness.":

Imām 'Alī (as) is reported(٣) to

۱- Tasnīfu Ghurari'l Hikam, pg. ۳۶۹

۲- Mu'jamu Alfāzi Ghurari'l Hikam, pg. ۸۱۰

۳- Ibid.

:have said

الْمُقِلُّ غَرِيْبٌ فِيْ بَلْدَتِهِ.

".The dispossessed is a stranger in his hometown"

Perhaps this is one reason why in the Urdu language the word gharīb is used to .denote poverty

:Other extensions of ghurba are as follows

١. Imām ʻAlī (as) is reported to have said:

الْغَرِيْبُ مَنْ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَبِيْبٌ.

".A stranger is one who does not have a friend"

٣. Imām ʻAlī (as) is reported to have said:

الأَحْمَقُ غَرِيْبٌ فِيْ بَلْدَتِهِ، مُهَانٌ بَيْنَ أَعِزَّتِهِ.

".A silly person is a stranger in his hometown, and degenerate among his friends"

'The Relative Aspect of the word 'Gharib

The abovementioned tradition indicates that whosoever is silly is gharīb (a stranger). However, this should not be taken in the absolute sense. The word gharīb is relative. One who is silly despite being gharīb (far) in the company of the learned, is at home in the company of his fellows. Similar is the case with the learned, for they are strangers in the company of the fools, but at home in the company of the learned: Another such instance is when a majority of the population are ignorant. Here again the learned are :strangers

:Imām ʻAlī (as) is reported to have said

الْعُلَمَاءُ غُرَبَاء لِكَثْرَةِ الْجُهَّالِ.

".The learned are strangers due to the great number of the ignorant"

Sometimes, however, the learned can be strangers in the company of the learned themselves. One who is specialized in chemistry, for example, and has no acquaintance with Eastern philosophy is an alien in the company of the Muslim .metaphysicians and vice versa

Furthermore, it is also possible for one to be a stranger and a

resident at the same time. For example, a scholar may be far from his hometown, and thus a stranger, but close to the learned class, and hence a resident. Sometimes, a scholar, despite being in his hometown, which is inhabited by the learned class of his own field, is still called a stranger in terms of being far from the proximity of Allāh .((swt

Ahlu'l Bayt (as): Positive Extensions of Gharīb

Most of the Muslims were oblivious to the future consequences of the decision made about the caliphate after the Prophet's (s) demise. The question of caliphate was not a matter of enjoyment of power for some decades, but the question of safeguarding the true version of Islam and the guardianship of the bearers of the final religion and their future generations. The extreme grief (karb) of Hadrat Fātima (as) indeed portrays, how far apart were the masses from her broad vision. She thought of the future, whereas others were heedless of the destruction of Islam, and were concerned with usurping material power. Her spirit wished well for the entire humanity, whereas others only thought of their own schemes. She together with her radiant family and very few trustworthy followers, was gharīb, since she was remote from those who were disobedient to God and those who could not foresee the calamities that would befall the Muslim nation. Whenever one tries to reflect upon this extension of ghurbah, the heart becomes constricted and the tongue stops and tears roll down the cheeks. The following statement(۱) of Fātima (as) sums

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Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۴۳, pg. ۱۵۶, tr. ۵ -۱

:it all up

Ummu Salama asks Hadrat Fātima (as): “O daughter of the Messenger of Allāh (s), ”?how did you approach your morning

:And Fātima (as) replies

أصْبَحْتُ بَيْنَ كَمَدٍ وَكَرْبٍ فَقْدِ النَّبِيِّ وَظُلْمِ الْوَصِيِّ.

I encountered morning in great grief and sorrow of the loss of the Prophet (s) and the“ ”...oppression of his successor

After this fundamental blow on the Muslim Ummah, the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) and their true .followers always remained gharīb among a great number of the Muslim Ummah

The Ghurba of Every Human Being of Tainted Disposition

O Allāh [the Name of the Essence that possesses all the Perfect Divine Attributes], return all the ghurabā’ (distanced) [who are spiritually far, which means that they do .[not enjoy the Divine Attributes

:(Hāfiz, the great mystic-poet says(۱

Man az dayāre habībam na az bilāde gharīb

Muhayminā be rafīqāne khud rasān bāzam

;I belong to the beloved’s town, not to the land of strangers

!O Lord, join me again to your friends

Masters on the path towards human perfection believe that the human being is a traveler in this world. He has a path to traverse, which is ‘the religion’ or in Qur’ānic terms ‘sirāt al-mustaqīm’ and a ‘destination’, which is Almighty Allāh Himself. :Referring to this Allāh (swt) says

The Human Being is a Traveler: Holy Qur’ān, ۸۴:۶ .۱

يَا أَيُّهَا الإِنْسَانُ إِنَّکَ کَادِحٌ إِلـى رَبِّکَ کَدْحًا فَمُلاَقِيهِ .

O human being you are always striving unto Your Lord laboriously and you shall meet“ ”.Him

The Path: Holy Qur’ān, ۱:۶ .۲

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ .

”.Guide us on the Straight Path“

The Destination, Holy Qur’ān, ۳۵:۱۸ .۳

وَ إِلـى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ .

To Allāh“

p: ۵۶

Dīwāne Khwājah Hāfiz Shīrāzī, ed. Pezhman, pg. ۱۵۰, ghazal ۳۳۴ -۱

”.is the endless journey

Religion, if practiced properly, can elevate the human being so high that he can also transcend the angels in perfection. Interested men and women may ask what dhikr or act to perform if one would like to begin the spiritual journey to Allāh. The stereotype that ‘the tarīqa’ (the spiritual path) is other than the ‘Sharī‘ah’ (the apparent Islamic law) is a great impediment inculcated by the Satan. It is by reading and understanding the Qur’ān and the Sunnah correctly and following the Tawdīhu’l Masā’il (the Book of Islamic Laws) that one can attain the heights of perfection. Many of us tend to conjecture that an ‘ārif (a mystic) is one who must isolate himself all the time and practice some specific dhikr and wait for spiritual revelations (mukāshafāt). Our Shī‘a scholars do not agree with this misconception. They believe that both the Sharī‘ah and the Tarīqah enjoy a unity. And it is by practicing the apparent Islamic law and observing both its inner as well as its outer etiquette that a human being can attain .Allāh’s nearness and transcend the angels

The human being’s ascent to God should not be mistaken with the physical journey. His journey is beyond the confines of time and space. He is in fact coloring himself with Divine Attributes and thus nearing The Gracious Presence. Our holy Imāms (as) who had reached the peaks of perfection were manifestations of Divine Attributes. :Look at the following tradition

Imām Ja’far al-Sādiq (as) is reported(۱) to

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۲۵, pg. ۴, tr. ۷ -۱

:have said

نَحْنُ الأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى.

".[We are the Most Beautiful Names [of Allāh"

Hence, in order to return back to our hometown, which is Allāh's proximity, we must :try to adopt the correct path set by Almighty Allāh: The Holy Qur'ān [۳۵:۱۸] says

وَمَنْ تَزَكَّى فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّى لِنَفْسِهِ وَإِلَـى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ .

"And whosoever purifies himself, purifies himself only for his own soul's good. To Allāh ".(is the homecoming (destination

Thus the path is 'self-purification', which is not different from following the Islamic .Laws

However, we must realize that the journey is not as easy as it may seem at first. For one to cover the different stations of the journey, a qualified master of gnosis is essential, since the path is full of obstacles and the accursed Satan is always on the watch. He always tries to impede the way of one who has made a firm resolution to .adopt the spiritual path

This, however, should not dishearten those who are far from places where such masters exist, for there are instances, which indicate that one can attain such exalted destinations without a direct relationship with such masters. [The fundamental role of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) however always remains. We shall explain this in our later discussions - Inshā Allāh.] The late Āyatullāh Muhammad Husayn Tehrānī reports a :thought-provoking incident in his Anwār-e-Malakūt(۱) as follows

Respect for Mother Turns one into a Friend of Allāh

Āyatullāh Tehrānī narrates that once in Tehran he had gone to the Islamiyya] bookshop situated on Buzarjumharī Street to purchase books. He was a friend of one of the partners of the

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Anwāre Malakūt, v. ۱ pp. ۱۴۱-۱۴۵ -۱

organization, Hāj Sayyid Muhammad Kitābchī, who was responsible for the store of the bookshop. He went to the bookshop to meet him and purchase some books as well. It was in the morning and approximately four hours remained to midday. A man had also come to the store to purchase books. Having purchased the books that he required, he started to leave, when suddenly he began saying: My beloved Allāh, my physician Allāh, my helper, my helper, my soul, my soul. The Āyatullāh narrates:] On looking at him, I saw that his face had turned red and he was sweating; he was plunged in happiness and ecstasy beyond limit. Addressing him, I said: 'Dear Sir! Dear Dervish, do not eat all alone; this is not the custom of etiquette'; He took a turn around himself and began chanting some poems of Bābā Tāhir 'Uryān [a well-known mystic buried in Hamadān]. Thereafter he kept silent and wept a lot. Then he became happy and laughed. I said: 'Ahsant! [Thereafter a conversation followed. During the conversation, Āyatullāh Muhammad Husayn Tehrani asks the saint to inform him how he could attain such an exalted station, and the saint narrates his anecdote as [:follows

I had an old mother who was sick and disabled. She was bed-ridden for many years. I alone was at her service, and would attend to her needs: I would cook food for her, bring water to her for ablution, and was at her service for her different needs. However, she

was very ill-mannered and would sometimes abuse me, but I would bear that and respond to her with a smile. Due to this very attitude of hers I did not get married, although my age exceeded forty years. This was because maintaining a family with the kind of character that my mother had was impossible for me. I knew that if I would marry, either she would cause our separation, or I would be forced to leave her. Abandoning my mother, however, was not acceptable to my conscience. Hence, I observed patience in remaining a bachelor, and resigned myself to the situation. Sometimes, due to great patience in front of her ill manners, I would experience a spark of light in my heart, a state of happiness and joy. However this would only be temporary. This situation continued until one cold winter night. I had placed my bed near hers so that she wouldl not be alone and would not need to raise her voice to call me for her necessities. On that night I had filled a jug with water, and placed it near my bedside all the time, so that if my mother required some water I would immediately give it to her. In the middle of that night she asked for water. I stood up immediately and filled a small vessel with water and gave it to her saying: 'Take, dear mother.' She, being in the state of drowsiness did not realize that I attended to her

request immediately; she thought that I had brought her the water late. Upon this, she abused me in odd, abusive language and hit me on my head with the vessel of water. I immediately filled the vessel with water once again and addressing her said: 'Dear mother, take, and forgive me; I am sorry! Saying this, I was overcome, and didn't know what happened next. In short, I attained my aspiration: those sparks had tuned into a world of light resembling the radiant sun; and my beloved, my friend, my helper, and my doctor, spoke to me. Thereafter this state never stopped. And it is ...years now that this state has remained

Dear readers, there is vast difference between the servant whispering to His Beloved and the Beloved whispering to His servant. Never conjecture that such an incident is farfetched for it was just another practical translation of Imām 'Alī's (as) statement in :Nahju'l Balāgha(١) as follows

وَمَا بَرِحَتْ لِلَّهِ عَزَّتْ آلاؤُهُ فِى الْبُرْهَهِ بَعْدَ الْبُرْهَهِ، وَفِى أَزْمَانِ الفَتَراتِ، عِبَادٌ نَاجَاهُمْ فِى فِكْرِهِمْ، وَكَلَّمَهُمْ فِيْ ذَاتِ عُقُوْلِهِمْ.

In all the periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been persons" to whom Allāh, precious are His bounties, whispered in their hearts and spoke in the ".essence of their intellects

As long as the opportunity remains, our 'ardent aspiration' should be to attain this particular gracious abode before we leave the world and cannot do anything. There is a very thought-provoking incident narrated in Rawdat al-Kāfī by Imām Muhammad (al-Bāqir (as):(٢

The Prayer of A Broad Minded Old–Woman

عَنْ أَبِى جَعْفَرٍ

(Nahju'l Balāgha, Sermon ٢٢٢ (٢٢٠-variation -١

Rawdat al-Kāfī, v. ٨, pp. ١١٠-١١١ -٢

(ع) قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) كَانَ نَزَلَ عَلَى رَجُلٍ بِالطَّائِفِ قَبْلَ الإِسْلَام فَأَكْرَمَهُ. فَلَمَّا أَنْ بَعَثَ اللَّهُ مُحَمَّداً (ص) إِلَى النَّاسِ، قِيلَ لِلرَّجُلِ: أَتَدْرِي مَنِ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَى النَّاسِ؟ قَالَ: لا. قَالُوا لَهُ: هُوَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، يَتِيمُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ، وَهُوَ الَّذِي كَانَ نَزَلَ بِكَ بِالطَّائِفِ يَوْمَ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَأَكْرَمْتَهُ. قَالَ: فَقَدِمَ الرَّجُلُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) فَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِ وَأَسْلَمَ، ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ: أَتَعْرِفُنِي يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: وَمَنْ أَنْتَ؟ قَالَ: أَنَا رَبُّ الْمَنْزِلِ الَّذِي نَزَلْتَ بِهِ بِالطَّائِفِ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَوْمَ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَأَكْرَمْتُكَ. فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص): مَرْحَباً بِكَ، سَلْ حَاجَتَكَ. فَقَالَ: أَسْأَلُكَ مِائَتَيْ شَاةٍ بِرُعَاتِهَا. فَأَمَرَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) بِمَا سَأَلَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ لِأَصْحَابِهِ: مَا كَانَ عَلَى هَذَا الرَّجُلِ أَنْ يَسْأَلَنِي سُؤَالَ عَجُوزِ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لِمُوسَى (ع) ؟ فَقَالُوا: وَمَا سَأَلَتْ عَجُوزُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لِمُوسَى؟ فَقَالَ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ ذِكْرُهُ أَوْحَى إِلَى مُوسَى أَنِ احْمِلْ عِظَامَ يُوسُفَ مِنْ مِصْرَ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَخْرُجَ مِنْهَا إِلَى الأَرْضِ الْمُقَدَّسَهِ بِالشَّام، فَسَأَلَ مُوسَى عَنْ قَبْرِ يُوسُفَ (ع) ، فَجَاءَهُ شَيْخٌ فَقَالَ: إِنْ كَانَ أَحَدٌ يَعْرِفُ قَبْرَهُ فَفُلانَهُ. فَأَرْسَلَ مُوسَى (ع) إِلَيْهَا، فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُ قَالَ: تَعْلَمِينَ مَوْضِعَ قَبْرِ يُوسُفَ (ع) ؟ قَالَتْ: نَعَمْ. قَالَ: فَدُلِّينِي عَلَيْهِ وَلَكِ مَا سَأَلْتِ. قَالَتْ: لاَ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَيْهِ إِلاَّ بِحُكْمِي. قَالَ: فَلَكِ الْجَنَّهُ. قَالَتْ: لا، إِلاَّ بِحُكْمِي عَلَيْكَ. فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَى مُوسَى (ع): لا يَكْبُرُ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ لَهَا حُكْمَهَا. فَقَالَ لَهَا مُوسَى (ع): فَلَكِ حُكْمُكِ. قَالَتْ: فَإِنَّ حُكْمِي أَنْ أَكُونَ مَعَكَ فِي دَرَجَتِكَ الَّتِي تَكُونُ فِيهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَهِ فِي الْجَنَّهِ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

(ص): مَا كَانَ عَلَى هٰذَا لَوْ سَأَلَنِى مَا سَأَلَتْ عَجُوزُ بَنِى إِسْرَائِيلَ؟

Before the advent of Islam, once when the Holy Prophet (s) happen to visit Tā'if," someone generously hosted him. Later when the Prophet (s) was appointed as a Messenger of Allāh, the said person was asked: 'Do you know whom did Allāh appoint as his Messenger to the people? 'No.' he replied. They said: 'It is Muhammad bin 'Abdillāh, the orphan of Abī Tālib, who, on such and such a day had been your guest in Tā'if and you graciously hosted him. Hearing this, the person comes in the presence of the Prophet (s), greets him, embraces Islam, and then says: 'O Messenger of Allāh, do you recognize me?' The Prophet (s) says: 'And who are you?' The man then says: 'I am the owner of the house in which you had put up in Tā'if during the age of ignorance (before the advent of Islam) on such and such a day and I hosted you. The Holy Prophet (s) said: 'You are welcome; ask what you what.' The man said: 'I want ٢٠٠ sheep together with their shepherds. The Holy Prophet (as) ordered that he be given what he wanted. Then addressing his companions he wished that the man .(would seek that which the old lady of Banī Isrā'īl asked from Prophet Mūsā (as

The companions asked: 'And what did the old lady of Banī Isrā'īl seek from Mūsā?' The Prophet (as) said: 'surely Allāh revealed to Prophet

Mūsā (as) to carry the bones of Prophet Yūsuf (as) before he left Egypt for the holy land in Shām. Thereupon Prophet Mūsā (as) asked about the whereabouts of the grave of Prophet Yūsuf (as), and an old man approached him and said: If at all any one happens to know the whereabouts of the grave, it is such and such old woman. Prophet Mūsā (as) asked her to be brought to him and when she came in his presence, he asked: 'Do you know the place of the grave of Prophet Yūsuf (as)?' She said: 'Yes.' The Prophet said: 'Therefore guide me towards the grave and I you will get whatever you ask.' She said: 'I shall not guide you towards it except you agree to what I want in return.' The Prophet (as) said: 'You shall get Paradise.' She said: 'No, except what I want.' Thereupon Almighty Allāh revealed to Prophet Mūsā (as) that agreeing to her request should not seem insurmountable to him. Therefore Prophet Mūsā (as) said: 'Alright, you would have what you want.' Thereupon she said: 'I would like to be with you in the same station that you would have in Paradise on the Day of Judgment.' Narrating this the Holy Prophet (s) said: 'why didn't this man seek that which the old woman of Banī Isrā'īl sought?"

This anecdote serves as a very important lesson for us. Ponder over the aspiration of the old woman. The lady is given Paradise but she rejects it.

She aspires beyond that. She yearns for the same station that Prophet Mūsā (as) would enjoy in the Hereafter, which is none other than Allāh's proximity or Jannat al-liqā' (The Paradise of meeting Allāh). Following are verses of Qur'ān that allude to this exalted station:

1. Holy Qur'ān: ۸۹:۲۷-۳۰

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ. ارْجِعِي إِلـى رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً. فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي. وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي .

"O soul at peace, Return to your Lord, while you are pleased with Him, and He is pleased with you, then enter the company of My obedient servants, And ENTER MY PARADISE."

2. Holy Qur'ān ۵۴:۵۴-۵۵

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ. فِي مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِيكٍ مُقْتَدِرٍ .

"Surely the God-wary (pious) are in gardens and rivers. In the seat of truth with the Most Powerful King."

Clearly the aspiration of the old lady of Banī Isrā'īl draws all of us to 'understand our real innate need' and pray accordingly. Let us not waste the opportunity of the nights of qadr at our disposal. Our aspiration should be the forgiveness of sins and Allāh's proximity. Yes, seeking 'long life', 'a lot of sustenance' etc. as 'the means to enable us attain Allāh's proximity is also highly recommended. Our supplications are full of expressions of such needs. But the material needs must always be sought as a means for the 'Great Return' to God. Otherwise the same worldly benefits can widen the gap. Let us take a lesson from Bībī Āsiya, Fir'awn's wife, who despite enjoying all the worldly pleasures, did not

surrender to Fir‘awn and faced painful torture from him. Almighty Allāh mentions her :supplication as follows

.رَبِّ ابْنِ لِی عِنْدَکَ بَیْتاً فِی الْجَنَّهِ .

".O my Lord, build for me NEAR YOU a house in paradise"

Āyatullāh al-‘Uzmā and the Apple of our eyes, Shaykh Jawādī Āmūlī (may Almighty Allāh prolong his exalted shadow), the contemporary commentator of Qur’ān and :(indeed a true successor of his teacher ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī in the field of tafsīr says(۱)

This woman asks for Paradise near God, whereas others only seek Paradise... However, this lady asks for God first, and then asks for a house near God. She does not say: Rabbibni lī baytan fi’l Janna (‘O Lord, build for me a house in Paradise’, nor does she say: Rabbibni lī baytan ‘indaka fi’l Janna (‘O Lord, build for me A HOUSE near You in Paradise.’ Rather she says: Rabbibni lī ‘indaka baytan fi’l Janna (‘O Lord, build for me NEAR YOU a house in Paradise). First she mentions ‘the proximity of Allāh’ and then she speaks about Paradise. That is, if it is a matter of al-Jār Thummaddār (First the neighbor, then the house), this lady says: Allāh, thumma al-Janna (First Allāh, and then Paradise). Certainly the Paradise that is ‘indallāh (near Allāh) is greatly different ...from the Paradise ‘underneath which rivers flow

:Allāmah Tabātabā’ī(۲) says‘

الْجَمْعُ بَیْنَ کَوْنِ الْبَیْتِ الْمَبْنِیِّ لَهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَفِی الْجَنَّهِ، لِکَوْنِ الْجَنَّهِ دَارَ الْقُرْبِ مِنَ اللَّهِ...

Seeking a house to be built near Allāh and in Paradise at the same time is due"

۱- Zan dar āineye Jamālo Jalāl, pp. ۱۵۶-۱۵۷

۲- Al-Mīzān, v. ۱۹, pg. ۳۴۴

to the fact that Paradise is the abode of Nearness to God."

True Believers are Gharīb!

There are various narrations that clearly state that a believer is a 'stranger.' For example:

1. Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) is reported(1) to have said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ غَرِيْبٌ وَ طُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ.

"A believer is a stranger; and blessed be the strangers!"

2. Kāmil at-Tammār(2) says:

سَمِعْتُ أبا جَعْفَرٍ (ع) يَقُوْلُ: أَلنَّاسُ كُلُّهُمْ بَهَائِم (ثَلَاثاً) إِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَالْمُؤْمِنُ غَرِيبٌ (ثَلَاث مَرَّاتٍ).

"I heard Abū Ja'far [Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir] (as), saying thrice: 'The people are all beasts save a few of the believers;' and thrice, 'a believer is a stranger (gharīb).'"

'Allāmah Majlīsī in his magnum opus 'The Oceans of Lights' comments on this tradition as follows:

بيان: كلهم بهائم أى شبيه بها فى عدم العقل، وإدراك الحق، وغلبه الشـهوات النفسانيه على القوى العقلانيه، كما قال تعالى: "إِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ كَالأَنْعـامِ بَـلْ هُمْ أَضَـلُّ سَبِيلاً." إلا قليل كـذا... المؤمن غريب لأنه قلما يجـد مثله فيسـكن إليه، فهو بين الناس كالغريب الذى بــــعُد عن أهله ووطنه ...

"Exposition: 'All are beast'" means that they resemble them in not using their intellect and not comprehending the truth and in their selfish desires dominating their intellectual faculties, as the Most High says: 'They are like animals; rather, they are more astray'... A believer is a stranger because he rarely finds his parallel so that he may seek repose in him; hence he is among the people like a stranger, who is far from his family and hometown..."(3)

Thus, following can be reasons why a believer is "gharīb":

1. A believer naturally aspires for the

۱- Mustadrak Safīnat al-Bihār, v. ۷, pg. ۵۵۰

۲- Al-Kāfī, v. ۲, pg. ۲۴۲

۳- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۶۴, pg. ۱۶۰

company of his All-Loving Creator and struggles to reach this exalted destination. As long as he has not reached the destination he always finds himself a stranger. Imām :‘Alī (as) is reported to have said

الدُّنْيا دارُ الْغُرْبَهِ وَمَوْطِنُ الأَشْقِيَاء.

”.The world is a place of remoteness and a residence for the wretched“

:And the following is reported(۱) in another tradition

حُبُّ الْوَطَنِ مِنَ الإِيْمَانِ.

”.Love for one’s hometown is a sign of faith“

۲. In the company of the non-believers, believers are strangers. This is because while they live in a world of belief, the love of God and concern for the salvation of humanity, the non-believers do not perceive the realities and attach themselves to .the world of matter and its benefits

Why was Imām ‘Alī al-Ridā (as) known as Imām al-Gharīb

:Sometimes when addressing our ۸th Holy Imām (as) we say

أَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْکَ يَا غَرِيبَ الْغُرَبَاء.

”.Peace be on you, O Stranger of the Strangers“

The teacher of Āyatullāh Muhammad Husayn Tehrānī in the discipline of gnosis- Sayyid Hāshim Haddād, was once asked the reason why Imām al-Ridā (as) was known as Imām al-Gharīb. He responded in some details. Two reasons(۲) one can :mention about this are

۱. The Imām enjoyed the station of wilāyah, which was so exalted, and close to Divine proximity, but far from other human beings. Necessarily, the majority of the people were not acquainted with the attributes of wilāya and the characteristics of a walī [who is a manifestation of Divine Attributes]. Thus Imām was gharīb in their company.

۲. Ma'mūn al-Rashīd forced the Imām (as) to Marv and the Imām (as) had to

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۱- Safīnat al-Bihār, v. ۸, pg. ۵۲۵

۲- Al-Tawhid Quarterly Journal, v. XIII, no. ۴, pp. ۷۲-۸۵

leave his hometown, his family and the neighborhood of the Holy Prophet's (s) tomb. Thus he was gharīb. In addition calling him to Marv was a kind of captivity, exile and imprisonment, for despite granting him power and a princely station, he deprived him from all his functions: he was neither allowed to give legal rulings nor to offer Friday .and 'Īd Prayers

In another ziyārah(۱) we also call Imām al-Husayn (as) as Gharīb al-ghurabā. And in a tradition narrated in al-Mashhadī's al-Mazār al-Kabīr, Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq (as) is :reported to have asked the following about a group of people

فَمَا يَمْـنَعُهُمْ مِنْ زِيَارَهِ قَبْرِ الْغَرِيبِ...

And what stops them from visiting the grave of al-Gharīb? [he means Imām al-" (Husayn (as)]."(۲)

The Hometown of the Gharīb

:Sayyid 'Alī Khān Husaynī, in his Riyād al-Sālikīn, quotes the following

سئـل أبو جعفر الشّاشـى: من الغريب؟ فقـال: الـذى يطلبه رضوان فى الجنّه فلا يجـده، ويطلبه مالـك فى النّار فلا يجـده، ويطلبه جبرئيل فى السّماوات فلا يجده، ويطلبه إبليس فى الأرض فلا يجده. فقال له أهل المجلس وقد تفطّرت قلوبهم: يا أبا جعفر! فأين يكون هذا الغريب؟ فقال: فى مقعد صدق عند مليك مقتدر.

Abū Ja'far al-Shāshī was asked: "Who is a stranger (gharīb)?" He said: "He is one whom the Ridwān seeks in Paradise, but does not find, one whom the Mālik seeks in Hell Fire, but does not find, one whom Gabrial seeks in the heavens but does not find, one whom Iblīs seeks in the earth, but does not find." So the people of the gathering asked him with broken hearts: "O

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۹۸, ch. ۱۸, pg. ۲۳۰ -۱
al-Mazār al-Kabīr, pg. ۳۳۳ -۲

Abā Ja'far, where then is this stranger?" He said: "In the seat of truth with the Most Powerful King (54:55)"

The Great Sign Complains of Ghurbah in the Supplication of Kumayl

The infallibility of Imām 'Alī (as) is an established fact and hence we would not like to engage in explaining the details of the same. We also know his famous saying:(1)

لَوْ كُشِفَ الْغِطَاءُ مَا ازْدَدْتُ يَقِيْنًا.

"If the veil was unveiled nothing would be added to my certitude."

Why then should he show his fear of separation from the Beloved? What kind of separation is this? What kind of unbearable ghurba is this? Āyatullāh Khumaynī, in his forty traditions when enumerating the levels of patience of the gnostics says:

Another level is that of sabr 'an Allāh (sabr from God) which pertains to the stations of lovers of God and piners for Him, of those blessed with epiphany (ahl al-shuhūd wa al-'ayān) at the time of returning to their own world, the world of plurality and sobriety (after intoxication with God). This is the hardest and the most difficult of the stations, and to it has referred the Master of the Wayfarers, the Commander of the Faithful, and the Leader of the Perfect (i.e. 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (as) in the noble Du'ā' Kumayl:

فَهَبْنِی یَا إِلٰهِی وَسَیِّدِی وَمَوْلَایَ وَرَبِّی صَبَرْتُ عَلی عَذَابِکَ، فَکَیْفَ أَصْبِرُ عَلَی فِرَاقِکَ؟

"O my God, my Master and my Lord! Even if I were able to endure Your chastisement, how shall I bear Your separation?!"

Perhaps the following dictum of Imām 'Alī (as) also explains the reality of the matter:

نَارُ الْفُرْقَهِ أَحَرُّ

1- Bihār al-Anwār, v. 40, pg. 153, tr. 5

مِنْ نَارِ جَهَنَّم.

"The fire of separation is hotter than Hellfire."(1)

أَللَّهُمَّ رُدَّ كُلَّ غَرِيْبٍ.

Hence, when we seek the return of all the strangers we must pray to Allāh to:

1. Return all those who have been driven out of their homes and suffer the pain of separation

2. Return all the sinful folk back to the proximity of Allāh, which in reality is: (1) Perfecting the human being in terms of Divine Attributes like knowledge, patience, etc., and (2) Lessening the gap between the high-ranking strangers like the A'immah (as) and the low-ranking ones like the sinful, and thus removing the ghurba of the Imāms from the rest too. [This point is worthy of reflection]. Otherwise, in another sense, the Imāms (as) being close to Almighty Allāh, were never gharīb (strangers). This is because they were never far from their spiritual hometown. There is a beautiful report narrated by al-Zamakhshari in his Rabī' al-Abrār worthy of reflection. He reports:

لَمَّا أُخْرِجَ يُوْسَفُ (ع) مِنَ الْجُبِّ وَاشْتُرِىَ، قَالَ لَهُمْ قَائِلٌ: إِسْتَوْصُوا بِهٰذَا الْغَرِيبِ خَيْراً. فَقَالَ لَهُمْ يُوسُفُ: مَنْ كَانَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ غُرْبَةٌ.

"When Yūsuf (as) was taken out of the well, and bought, a person said to them: 'Take care of this stranger (gharīb). [Hearing this,] Yūsuf (as) said to them: whosoever is with Almighty Allāh, is not a stranger."(2)

O Allāh, Free Every Captive

point

أَللَّهُمَّ فُكَّ كُلَّ أَسِيْرٍ

Meaning of Asīr

The word Asīr originates from al-asr, which means:

الشَّدُّ بِالْقَيْدِ...

"...Fastening with a bond"

Rāghib, the famous lexicographer, in his Qur'ānic dictionary al-Mufradāt(۳) says:

One who was tied by fetters was known to be

۱- Mīrāth-e-Hadīthe Shī'e, v. ۸, pg. ۲۱۷

۲- Rabī' al-Abrār wa Nusūs al-Akhbār, v. ۳, pg. ۵

۳- al-Mufradāt, pg. ۷۶, new ed.

asīr; thereafter, the word was intended for every entity that is seized and bound, :even if it was not fettered by anything… for example

أَنَا أَسِيْرُ نِعْمَتِكَ.

”.I am bound to your favor“

From the abovementioned definition, the comprehensiveness of the concept of the word ‘asīr’ becomes clear. The traditions of the Holy Prophet (s) and his immaculate :progeny also reveal this truth. Following are some examples

:a. Imām Abu’l Hasan al-Thālith(١) (‘Alī al-Naqī (as)) is reported to have said

وَالْجَاهِلُ أَسِيْرُ لِسَانِهِ.

.The ignorant one is a captive of his tongue

:b. In a supplication(٢) from Yūsha’ bin Nūn (as) we find the following expression

إِلٰهِي: أَنْتَ مَلِكُ الْعَطَايَا، وَأَنَا أَسِيْرُ الْخَطَايَا.

”.O God, You are the Sovereign of bestowals while I am a captive of my faults“

c. In one Ziyārah of Arba‘īn(٣) (۴٠th of Imām al-Husayn (as)) said to be taught by Imām :al-Sādiq (as), we address Imām al-Husayn (as) as follows

أَلسَّلَامُ عَلى أَسِيرِ الْكُرُبَاتِ.

”.Peace be upon the captive of deep sorrows“

:d. In his well known epistle(۴) to Mālik al-Ashtar, Imām ‘Alī (as) says

...فَإِنَّ هٰذَا الدِّينَ قَدْ كَانَ أَسِيراً فِى أَيْدِى الْأَشْرَارِ؛ يُعْمَلُ فِيْهِ بِالْهَوَى، وَتُطْلَبُ بِهِ الدُّنْـيَا...

for surely this Religion was a captive in the hands of the evil folk, for under its…“ ”…pretext they would follow their base inclinations and seek worldly gains

e. In Nahju’l Balāgha(۵), while explaining the characteristics of the angels, Imām ‘Alī

:(as) is reported to have said

...فَهُمْ أُسَرَاءُ إِيْمَانٍ...

"...for they are captives of faith..."

The word 'asīr' likewise has a relative connotation: whereas a group of people may be captives of their

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Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۷۸, pg. ۳۶۸, tr. ۳ -۱

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۹۴, pg. ۹۳, tr. ۸ -۲

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۱۰۱, pg. ۳۳۱, tr. ۲ -۳

Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter ۵۳ -۴

Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon ۹۱ -۵

vain inclinations but suffer no physical imprisonment, while another group may enjoy .utter spiritual freedom, but be in the state of physical captivity

The Apparent Extension of Asīr

Certainly, this verse is one of the most painful verses of the supplication. Many innocent human beings throughout the world today suffer imprisonment. While a group among them are victims of oppression and breach of man-made law, there is a .class whose very innocence has brought them behind bars

Being behind bars is only one part of the story. The oppression and torture that these innocent captives have to bear is terrible and inexpressible. Such kind of treatment stems from the kind of cruelty possessed by the wardens of the different prisons, who receive the power of discretion from their masters, who in turn possess authority through their respective governments. The following statement from Amnesty :International(١) speaks of this reality

Torture does not happen in a vacuum. The social and political context, and the supply of tools and techniques for inflicting pain rely on a failure of political will. If the .governments of the world had the political will to stop torture they could do so

In order to appreciate the gravity of the matter, one can refer to the relevant texts available on prison torture in the Internet from human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch [hrw.org] and the like. Due to the brevity of this commentary, however, we would only mention a few examples of the situation prevailing on the :prisons of the world

Prisoners Suffering Torture

:MEN, WOMEN CHILDREN .١

١- A branch of Amnesty International, [٩] http://www.stoptorture.org

but torture continues and is not confined to military dictatorships or authoritarian ...“ regimes; torture is inflicted in democratic states too. It is also clear that victims of torture are criminal suspects as well as political prisoners, the disadvantaged as well as the dissident, people targeted because of their identity as well as their beliefs. (They are women as well as men, children as well as adults.”(۱

WOMEN: “Amnesty International (AI) has documented countless cases of women .۲ being tortured in custody. In its coverage of armed conflicts, it has reported the (systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.”(۲

CHILDREN: “The fact that children could suffer torture at all should come as a .۳ terrible shock. Their dependency and vulnerability should render them immune from the atrocities adults inflict on one another. Their very innocence should put them .beyond reach

Yet violence against children is endemic: children are tortured by the police or security (forces...(۳

Methods of Torture

The survey showed that beating is by far the most common method of torture and ill-treatment by state agents today, reported in over ۱۵۰ countries. People are beaten with fists, sticks, gun-butts, makeshift whips, iron pipes, baseball bats, electric flex. Victims suffer bruises, internal bleeding, broken bones, lost teeth, ruptured organs .and some die

Rape and sexual abuse of prisoners is also widespread. Other common methods of torture and ill-treatment include electric shocks (reported in more than ۴۰ countries), suspension of the body (more than ۴۰ countries), beating on the soles of the feet (more than ۳۰

.Ibid -۱

[A branch of Amnesty International – www.stoptorture.org/report/index.htm [۱۰ -۲

۳- Ibid.

countries), suffocation (more than ٣٠ countries), mock execution or death threat (more than ٥٠ countries) and prolonged solitary confinement (more than ٥٠ countries).

Other methods include submersion in water, stubbing of cigarettes on the body, being tied to the back of a car and being dragged behind it, sleep deprivation and sensory deprivation...

The most common forms of judicial corporal punishment include amputation and flogging. Some forms such as amputation and branding are deliberately designed to permanently mutilate the human body. However, all of these punishments can cause a range of long-term or permanent injuries.(١)

The attitude of Islamic law, however, whose source is the Creator of human being himself, is greatly different. Browsing through the history of Islamic leadership from the time of the Holy Prophet (s) until now, we come to understand the verity of this contention. Following are examples:

١. The first war that the Muslims valiantly fought was Badr. Overwhelming the disbelievers, the Muslims apprehended many nonbelievers and took them as captives. However, the Prophet (s) considered the 'captives' as human beings and believed that they too had certain rights. No one was allowed to maltreat them. Instead ways of letting them free were suggested to them. Accordingly many were set free with a ransom fee. History tells us that(٢):

وَكَانَ يُفَادِى بِهِمْ عَلَى قَدْرِ أَمْوَالِهِمْ.

"And the Prophet (s) took a ransom fee from them according to their financial state."

Some of the captives had no wealth, but knew the art of writing. The Prophet (s) would tell each of them to

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١- Ibid.

٢- Hayāt al-Nabī wa Sīratuhu, v. ٢, pg. ٦٠

teach ten men from Medina as a ransom.

۲. It is reported(۱) that after Ibn Muljim struck the fatal blow on Imām ‘Alī (as), the Imām addressing his two sons (as), said:

إِحْبِسُوْا هٰذَا الأَسِيْرَ وَأَطْعِمُوْهُ وَاسْقُوْهُ وَأَحْسِنُوْا إِسَارَهُ.

“Imprison this captive, and give him food and drink, and deal with him in a good way in his captivity.”

And in another tradition(۲) he says the following about Ibn Muljim:

إِنَّهُ أَسِيْرٌ؛ فَأَحْسِنُوْا نُزْلَهُ، وَأَكْرِمُوْا مَثْوَاهُ. فَإِنْ بَقِيْتُ، قَتَلْتُ أَوْ عَفَوْتُ. وَإِنْ مِتُّ، فَاقْتُلُوْهُ قَتْلَتِي، وَلاَ تَعْتَدُوْا إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ .

“Indeed he is a captive; therefore give him good food and a nice place; then if I were to remain alive I would either kill him or forgive him; and if I die, then kill him the way he struck me [with one blow] and do not transgress the limits, for verily Allāh does not love those who transgress the limits.” [۲:۱۹۰]

This practical encounter of Imām ‘Alī (as) in those sensitive moments exemplifies the outlook of the teachings of Islam. Grudge and revenge does not remain in the heart of ‘Alī (as), for every element of his body is the instrument of Allāh (swt).

۳. If one were to study carefully the rights of prisoners according to Islam, he would realize how far apart man made law is from Divine law. Shaykh Najm al-Dīn Tabasī in his Mawārid al-Sijn [Occasions of Prison] enumerates some of the rights of prisoners as follows:(۳)

“…believing prisoners can attend Friday and ‘Īd Prayers under surveillance, and then return

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۱- Mawsū’at al-Imām ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib, v. ۷, pg. ۲۵۰, tr. ۲۹۴۹

۲- Ibid., v. ۷, pg. ۲۵۰, tr. ۲۹۵۰

۳- Mawārid al-Sijn, pg. ۴۹۳ onwards

immediately to their cells, prisoners may meet with their near ones and are free to receive food and clothing from them too, prisoners should be imprisoned in a healthy environment and allowed to go out under surveillance during a particular time, one who is ill should not be imprisoned, the support that the prisoner gives to his family, ”...must be drawn from the public treasury (baytu’l māl) of the Muslims, etc

The above however should not lead one to believe that prisoners should be left without interrogation or motivation to repent. The prisoner is dealt according to the crime that he or she has committed. Political prisoners are also dealt with in a different way. However, the prisoner is not treated like an animal or tortured or raped or even psychologically threatened or intimidated. These are against the dictates of the Islamic Sharī‘ah. Rather, they are dealt with as human beings and no one is allowed to transgress the limits laid by Almighty Allāh. Hence, should we hear or observe inhuman behavior from the prison wardens of a so-called Islamic state, we must not be led to think that that is what Islam believes. There is a vast difference between the criteria being ‘Islam’ and the criteria being ‘the deed of a non-practising .Muslim ruler

:Look at the following traditions carefully

:Imām Ja’far al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said

إِنَّ عَلِيّاً (ع) كَانَ يُطْعِمُ مَنْ خُلِّدَ فِی السِّجْنِ مِنْ بَیتِ مَالِ الْمُسْلِمِینَ.

Surely, ‘Alī (as) would feed the captive who served life imprisonment from“

p: ۷۷

the treasury of the Muslims."

Imām 'Alī (as)[1] is reported to have said:

إِطْعَامُ الأَسِيْرِ وَالإِحْسَانُ إِلَيْهِ حَقٌّ وَاجِبٌ، وَإِنْ قَتَلْتَهُ مِنَ الْغَدِ.

"Feeding the captive and doing good to him, is a compulsory right, even if you were to kill him [in accordance with the penal laws of Islam] the following day."

Hawā al-Nafs: One of the Most Destructive Kinds of Captivity

1. The Holy Qur'ān [Sūrat al-Qasas ۲۸:۵۰] says:

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِنَ اللَّهِ .

"...and who is more stray than he who follows his low desires without any guidance from Allāh?"

2. Imām 'Alī (as) is reported[2] to have said:

كَمْ مِنْ عَقْلٍ أَسِيرٍ عِنْدَ هَوًى أَمِيرٍ.

"How great a number are there intellects under the captivity of dominant inclinations!"

3. Imām 'Alī (as) is reported[3] to have said:

إِنَّ أَخْوَفَ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ إِثْنَتَانِ: اتِّبَاعُ الْهَوَى وَطُوْلُ الأَمَلِ.

"Surely there are two things that I fear most from you: following your vain inclinations and having forlorn hopes."

One of the most destructive extensions of captivity is the captivity of the soul by base inclinations. In the language of the Qur'ān, it is called "al-hawā". It is a great hurdle on our way to God. Nearly every world problem today stems from this very element of destruction. Rather, the entire history of creation is replete with examples that show how destructive this kind of captivity has been: due to this very captivity, Satan did not prostrate before Adam although he was commanded to do so, Cain was led to kill Abel

despite the latter being his own brother, Noah's (as) son left his father although

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۱- Mīzān al-Hikma, v. ۱, pg. ۷۶

۲- Mu'jamu Ghuraril Hikam, pg. ۳۴

۳- Nahjul Balāgha, sermon no. ۲۸

the latter was a prophet of Allāh (swt), and the list goes on. Study the causes of the different wars and conflicts of the past and present and you would realize that the root cause is this very kind of captivity. When a president suffers such captivity, he kills many innocent civilians; when a minister of finance is shackled by such captivity, he embezzles millions of dollars; when an irreligious and aimless human being suffers such captivity, he engages in different kinds of evils. In short, whosoever enjoys more .power affects mischief accordingly

Freedom from such captivity, however, is in our hands. Almighty Allāh has given us the keys to the door of the prison and advised us to leave, but the attraction of the .amenities of the prison, it seems, has kept us from moving

!Hawā al-Nafs Lowers One to the Example of a Dog

:The Holy Qur'ān [chapter ۷, verse no. ۱۷۵-۱۷۶] says

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَأَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ. وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَٰكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ .

Relate to them the story of the man to whom We sent Our Signs, but he passed them" by: so Satan followed him up, and he went astray. If it had been Our Will, We should have elevated him with Our Signs; but he inclined to the earth, and followed his own vain desires. His similitude is that of a dog: if you attack him, he lolls out his tongue, or if you leave

".him alone, he (still) lolls out his tongue

This verse, according to a tradition quoted by 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī in his al-Mizān and narrated by Tafsīr al-Burhān, talks about Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā. He was a man who lived during the time of Prophet Musa (as) and enjoyed a high spiritual state, for according to a tradition reported from Imām al-Ridā (as) he knew the ism al-a'zam (the Great Name of Allāh). Later, due to his base inclinations, he became a supporter of Fir'awn and became spiritually ignoble. Imām al-Ridā (as) is reported to have said(۱): "Surely Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā was given the Great Name of God and whenever he would pray with the same, his supplication would be accepted. Then he inclined towards Fir'awn. Once when Fir'awn was after Prophet Mūsā (as) and his followers, he met Bal'am and said: 'Pray to Allāh to throw Mūsā (as) and his followers into our trap.' Subsequently, he climbed his donkey to set out for searching Mūsā (as) and his companions. The donkey, however, did not move. So he began hitting it. Thereafter Allāh (the Invincible and Exalted) enabled it to speak and [addressing Bal'am] it said: Woe unto you! For what are you hitting me? Do you want me to accompany you so that you pray against Prophet Mūsā (as), the Prophet of Allāh and the believing nation? Bal'am [paid no attention] and continued hitting the donkey until he killed the animal. Thereupon ".Bal'am forgot the great Name of God

This verse is a lesson

Al-Burhān Fī Tafsīri'l Qur'ān, v. ۳, pp. ۲۴۶-۲۴۷ -۱

for all those learned folk who have attained a degree of piety. If one is not steadfast in his war against his base soul, there is a risk of him falling into a state of degradation and spiritual destruction. We seek refuge in the All-Merciful Lord from every kind of .ignominy that separates us from His Neighborhood

:Verse no. ۱۷۶ considers the example of Bal'am as the example of a dog

فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ .

So his parable is as the parable of a dog; if you attack him, he lolls out his tongue; and" if you leave him alone he lolls out his tongue; this is a parable of those who reject our ".signs; therefore relate the narrative so that they may reflect

Preference of External Imprisonment Over Internal Imprisonment

:The Qur'ān [۱۲:۳۳] quotes Prophet Yūsuf's (as) prayer

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَـيَّ مِـمَّا يَدْعُونَـنِى إِلَيْهِ .

"...O My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that unto which they invite me"

The story of Prophet Yūsuf (as) in the Holy Qur'ān is a lesson for every human being who aspires to live a life of freedom and prosperity. After Zulaykha provoked Yūsuf (as) but was met with failure, she tried to accuse him of seducing her. Her accusation was proven to be false by a witness. The news of this event spread in the town and Zulaykha was accused of trying to provoke Yūsuf who was 'the embodiment of chastity.' In order

to extinguish the fire of the situation, she invited those women who accused her and giving each a citrus fruit and a knife, told them to cut the fruit when Yūsuf passed by. Instead of cutting the fruit they wounded their hands. They were captivated by the .(physical beauty of Yūsuf (as

:The Holy Qur'ān says

:The news spread and the women began talking .١

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِى الْمَدِينَهِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتَاهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا إِنَّا لَنَرَاهَا فِى ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ .

Certain women that were in the city said, 'The Governor's wife seeks to seduce her" slave from his (pure) self; surely he has affected her deeply with love; verily we see [her in manifest error.'" [Sūrat Yūsuf - ١٢:٣٠

Whereas at the onset the women reckon Zulaykha to be in manifest error, they .themselves invite Yūsuf (as) to have a relationship with them later

:Zulaykha invites the women .٢

.لَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَأً وَآتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَهٍ مِنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَٰذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ .

When she heard of their scheming talk, she sent for them, and prepared for them a" repast and gave each of them a knife and said [to Yūsuf]: 'Come out unto them.' And when they saw him they extolled him; and [in their amazement] cut their hands saying: Hāshā lilLāh! (Far from Allāh is every imperfection!) This is no mortal; this is none but a noble angel.'" [Sūrat

[Yūsuf – ۱۲:۳۱

.۳ Zulaykha admits that they were right, and threatens Yūsuf with Imprisonment:

قَالَتْ فَذٰلِكُنَّ الَّذِى لُمْتُنَّنِى فِيهِ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدتُّهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ وَلَئِنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا آمُرُهُ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُوناً مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ .

"She said: This is he about whom you blamed me; and indeed I sought to seduce him from his [pure] self, but he did firmly abstain himself guiltless; and now if he does not do what I command him, he shall certainly be imprisoned, and he shall certainly be of those brought low!" [Sūrat Yūsuf – ۱۲:۳۲]

Despite accusing Yūsuf (as) at the onset of trying to seduce her, she clearly admits that she was the one who tried to provoke him. Furthermore, she says that he would either have to surrender to her desire or fall in prison [and thus also be branded as the one in fault]

.۴ The women would like to have relationship with Yūsuf (as)

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِى إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّى كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنْ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ .

"He said, 'O My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that unto which they invite me (yad'ūnanī ilayhi); and if you do not avert from me their conspiracy I would be inclined to them and become of the ignorant ones.'" [Sūrat Yūsuf – ۱۲:۳۳]

In a lengthy tradition narrated(۱) by Abū Hamzā al-Thumālī, Imām Zayn al-'Abidīn (as) is reported to have said that after leaving the gathering that Zulaykha had organized, each one of the women sent a message to Yusuf secretly

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۱- Tafsir al-Mizān, v. ۱۱, pp. ۱۶۴-۱۶۵

in the absence of Zulaykhā] and asked him that they would like to meet him. But]
:Prophet Yūsuf (as) refused, and prayed to Allāh

.وَإِلاَّ تَصْرِفْ عَنِّى كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنْ مِنْ الْجَاهِلِينَ .

If You do not ward off their scheme, I would be inclined to them and be of the“
”.ignorant ones

According to the commentators of the Qur’ān, the word yad‘ūnanī ilayhi (“they call me to”) which is in the imperfect tense (mudāri’) indicates that they were persistently
:inviting Yūsuf (as) towards themselves. However, Prophet Yūsuf (as) cried

.قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَىَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِى إِلَيْهِ وَإِلاَّ تَصْرِفْ عَنِّى كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنْ مِنْ الْجَاهِلِينَ .

O My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that unto which they invite me; and if you do“ not avert from me their conspiracy I would be inclined to them and be of the ignorant
[ones.” [Sūrat Yūsuf- ۱۲:۳۳

This verse clearly shows that Prophet Yūsuf (as) had the sexual desire, and was aware of the danger he was entrapped in. He therefore beseeched Almighty Allāh to protect him from what they conspired. He preferred to be imprisoned and accepted humiliation [of being attributed falsely to be at fault] but did not dare to disobey his
:Lord. And the All-merciful Lord responded

.فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ .

And his Lord accepted his prayer and warded off their conspiracy; surely he is the All-“
”.hearing, the All-knowing

.These are situations when the true nature of a believer is revealed

Prophet Yūsuf (as) prefers to be a captive of the external forces then to be entrapped by the licentious forces within, which ruin the human being and his entire future. The prison here is a sanctuary and salvation. It is a place of shelter for this spirit, which is burning with the love of Allāh (swt). He is ready to suffer the travails and hardships of imprisonment and humiliation but cannot withstand the torture of disobeying the only Beloved, who reared him to be what he was. And how can it ever be conceivable for one whose heart brims with the love of Allāh to even think of blemishing his hands ?with sin

A Subtle Allusion

Allāmah Tabātabā'ī in his Al-Mīzān says something worthy of reflection: when' Zulaykha tighly closed the doors of her room (ghallaqat al-abwāb), and relying on the apparent power that she had, said: 'hayta lak' (Come [to me]!), Yūsuf (as) was immersed in the love of Allāh and forgot every apparent means of refuge, including himself; hence when seeking refuge in Almighty Allāh, he never said "Innī a 'ūdhu" (Surely I seek refuge) but said: 'ma 'ādhallāh!' [Nb: Although both a 'ūdhu billāhi and ma 'ādhallāh show that Yūsuf seeks Refuge in Allāh, but in the case of the latter (i.e. ma 'ādhallāh) the supplicant forgets all the apparent means of refuge, including .[himself

:Allāmah Tabātabā'ī(۱) says'

...فَلَمْ يَقُلْ: إِنِّیْ أَعُوْذُ مِنْکَ بِاللّٰهِ أَوْ مَا يُؤَدِّیْ مَعْنَاهُ، وَإِنَّمَا قَالَ: مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ...

he [prophet Yusuf (as)] did not say: 'Indeed I seek refuge with...

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al-Mīzān, v. ۱۱, pp. ۱۲۰-۱۲۳ -۱

Allāh from you…’ or a statement similar to that; rather he only said: ‘ma ‘ādhallāh’ …((hence not making any mention of “I” or “You” or any other means

:Then ‘Allāmah continues saying

…وكَمْ مِنَ الْفَرْق بَيْنَ قَوْلِهِ هٰذا وَبَيْنَ قَوْلِ مَرْيَم للرُّوحِ لَمَّا تَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَراً سَوِيًّا: إِنِّى أَعُوْذُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْکَ…

and what a great a difference between this statement of his and Maryam’s…“ statement to the Holy Spirit when he appeared to her in the form of a man:’surely I [take refuge in the All-merciful from you…” [۱۹:۱۸

!The Captive of Allāh on Earth

Allāmah Majlisī in his magnum opus ‘The Oceans of Lights’ narrates(۱) a tradition in‘ which the Prophet (s) is asked to explain the status of Imām ‘Alī (as), whereupon the :Prophet (s) speaks about his merits at great length. At one point he says

أَلا ومَنْ أَحَبَّ عَلِيّاً سُمِّىَ أَسِيْرُ اللّٰهِ فِى الأَرْضِ، وَبَاهَى اللّٰهُ بِهِ مَلائِکَتَهُ وَحَمَلَهَ عَرْشِهِ.

Indeed whosoever loves ‘Alī is called the captive of Allāh on the earth and Allāh is“ ”.proud of him near His angels and the Bearers of His throne

:Here two points must be understood

?What does ‘love for ‘Alī (as)’ mean in this tradition .۱

?What does it mean to be Allāh’s captive on earth .۲

What makes us love ‘Alī (as)? Is it his blessed physical appearance? Is it the place where he lived? Is it the people whom he met? Is it the tribe which he belonged to? Or is it his excellent characteristics, which manifest true Islam or in the words of the ?’gnostics ‘manifest the Divine Attributes

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Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۲۷, pg. ۱۱۵, tr.۸۹ -۱

Clearly it is the knowledge of ‘Alī’s manifestation of Divine Attributes that ignites sparks of love in our hearts. We would like to enjoy his company; rather, if we look at the depth of the matter, ‘we would like to be another ‘Alī.’ Love itself draws one to .seek unity with the beloved

The believers, therefore, who experience love for Imām ‘Alī (as), in reality seek ‘his Attributes.’ And ‘the attributes of ‘Alī (as)’ are the attributes of the Prophet (s); and the attributes of the Prophet (s) are manifestations of the Attributes of Allāh (swt). Look at :the following traditions carefully

:The Holy Prophet (s) is reported(۱) to have said

مَنْ أَحَبَّ عَلِيّاً فَقَدْ أَحَبَّنِيْ، وَمَنْ أَحَبَّنِي فَقَدْ أَحَبَّ اللّٰهَ.

”.Whosoever loves ‘Alī loves me; and whosoever loves me loves Allāh“

What use is that love which has no tangible effect? In a tradition, Imām Muhammad :(al-Bāqir (as) addressing Jābir Ju’fī, says(۲

...يَا جَابِرُ: مَنْ أَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ وَأَحَبَّنَا فَهُوَ وَلِيُّنا، وَمَنْ عَصَى اللّٰهَ لَمْ يَنْفَعْهُ حُبُّنَا.

O Jābir! He who obeys Allāh and loves us is our friend; and whosoever disobeys...“ ”.Him, our love would not benefit him

Imagine that you are fond of particular attire, which would surely make you look presentable and handsome and beautiful. If there is no hurdle in your way or there is a hurdle, but can be removed easily, wouldn’t you try to purchase the dress? Certainly you would. Likewise, if ‘one really is fond of acquiring the attributes of Imām ‘Alī (as)’ and has the means at his disposal and

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Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۵, pg. ۶۹, tr.۱ -۱
Mizān al-Hikma, v. ۱, pg. ۵۱۹, tr. ۳۲۱۱ -۲

?can vanquish the hurdle of ‘his selfish desires’ wouldn’t he struggle for the same

Nevertheless, there are degrees of love, which remain in the level of the heart and have little effect in the minds and the hearts. Such people, due to maintaining their ‘innate disposition’ (fitra) up to a certain extent, would be cleansed in the Hell Fire .before residing in heaven. Some traditions do allude to this reality

But when we equate a lover of ‘Alī (as) with a captive of Allāh (swt) whom Almighty Allāh is proud of, it is wrong to think that love here merely stands for emotional attachment. Can the possession of ‘emotional attachment’ be the same as ‘complete obedience to Allāh’? Certainly not. Therefore love in the tradition under discussion is :of a greater degree. The Holy Qur’ān [۲:۱۶۵] alludes to this as follows

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ... .

”.And those who believe have more intense love for Allāh“

’A Free Man in Karbalā

The timeless event of Karbalā’ reveals a beautiful example of one who freed himself from the shackles of his vain inclinations and consequently represented an embodiment of his name. He was called Hurr (the free one). At the onset he was among the commanders of Yazīd. However, upon realization of the worth of the truth, he repented and joined the ranks of Imām al-Husayn (as). Having fought very bravely in the ranks of the Imām (as) against the Kuffār, he attained the exalted station of martyrdom. In his last moments, as Imām al-Husayn (as) was wiping blood

:from his radiant face, he said

أَنْتَ حُرٌّ کَما سَمَّتْکَ أُمُّکَ، وَأَنْتَ حُرٌّ فِی الدُّنْیا وَالآخِرَه.

You are Hurr (a free man) as your mother named you; and you are free in this world" ".as well as the Hereafter

The well-known Shī'a historian, Bāqir Sharīf al-Qarashī, in his Hayāt al-Imām al-Husayn (as) after quoting the above, remarks:

لَقَدْ کَانَ الْحُرُّ حُرّاً حِیْنَمَا غَلَبَ عَقْلُهُ هَوَاهُ...

Surely Hurr was 'a free man' when his intellect won over his vain inclination" ((hawāhu)."(١)

A Deliberation on the Solution

١. When we pray to Almighty Allāh to release all the captives, we do not pray for the release of every kind of captive, whether he or she be a captive of Allāh or a captive of Satan. Rather, we pray for all those captives whose captivity impedes them from physical and spiritual prosperity. However, deliverance from spiritual captivity, as we mentioned above, is in the hands of the captive himself. If he wakes up from his slumber and changes his wrong attitudes, he would free himself. And one who is successful in doing so can struggle to spread the culture of how to free others from the shackles of spiritual imprisonment, and consequently translate this radiant verse .of the supplication into action

٢. Both physical and spiritual captivity sometimes are genuine and the fault of the prisoner himself. For example: if one were to intentionally steal or prefer one's mundane desires to Divine law. Hence, the supplicant should also try to humbly seek the eradication of the causes that lead to such imprisonment. In reality, both

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١- Hayāt al-Imām al-Husayn □, v. ٣, pg. ٢٢٢

kinds of imprisonment in their genuine state stem from ittibā‘ al-hawā (following one's base inclinations]. Therefore, we must pray that the culture of taqwā .penetrates into our societies so that 'genuine' imprisonment no more prevails

٣. Many cases of imprisonment in the contemporary era are manifestations of oppression by ungodly governments. Such acts of oppression can sometimes be thwarted by a united uprising by the masses. If the masses continue such protests, it would obviously frighten the government and there would be chances for the release .of the innocent captives

۴. A substantial number of so-called Muslim states can hamper the mass killings of the blood thirsty superpowers, for one of the most significant sources of energy are in their hands: oil, or 'black gold.' The case of Palestine also can be solved very easily by them. But it is their base interests that hamper them from using their intellects, and in .the process make them earn eternal ignominy

O Allāh, Reform Every Uneven Affair of the Muslims

point

أَللَّهُمَّ أَصْلِحْ كُلَّ فَاسِدٍ مِنْ أُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

O Allāh, Reform Every Uneven Affair of the Muslims

The Meaning

اَصْلِحْ (Aslih):

This imperative verb is normally translated as 'Reform!' and 'Rectify!' It originates from the word al-salāh, which means 'equilibrium' and 'balance.' And 'salāh' is the :opposite of the word 'fasād', which according to Rāghib al-Isfahānī means

خُرُوجُ الشَّيءِ عَنِ الإِعْتِدَالِ.

"The deviation of an entity from its equilibrium."(1)

Consequently, the word aslih literally means 'Restore [such and such a thing or affair]

’!to [its] equilibrium

’.fāsid” means ‘something out of its equilibrium“ فَاسِد And the word

أُمُوْرُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Umūru’l Muslimīn means “Affairs

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Mufradātu Alfāzi’l Qur’ān, new ed., pg. ۶۳۶ -۱

”.of Muslims

Thus we are asking Almighty Allāh to restore all those affairs of the Muslims, which have lost their equilibrium and become distorted. Such affairs may pertain to individual or social life, and may concern all the members of the Muslim ummah or a .certain group in particular

As explained earlier [in the previous discussions of the supplication], whenever one prays for something, he or she must also seek its respective solution. The same law applies here too. Seeking reform in any matter should be preceded by knowledge and effort to facilitate the reform. As we pray for equilibrium in the affairs of the Muslims, :we should try to

(١) Identify those Muslim affairs which are in the state of disequilibrium,

(٢) Acquire knowledge about the correct and most efficient ways to rectify the state of affairs, and

(٣) Prepare ourselves to effect equilibrium to these respective affairs.

Self-reform is the Beginning

Before embarking on any kind of reform, the aspirant of reform should have the competency to effect it. Mere ‘aspiration’ to see reform does not qualify one to effect the same. And the most fundamental condition of qualifying to reform others is ‘self-reform.’ In other words, one must ensure that he or she enjoys the state of equilibrium in order to be able to effect it elsewhere. Otherwise, it would mean that disequilibrium can effect equilibrium, the absurdity of which is quite clear. :Metaphysicians express this reality as follows

فَاقِدُ الشَّيءِ لاَ يُعْطِيه.

“One who does not possess a thing cannot confer the same.” (١)

The chaos created by so-called reformers

١- This is also a proverb in the Arabic language.

of the past is due to this very reason. They set out to confer equilibrium to the nation, but instead increased its state of disequilibrium. The reason behind this was that they themselves did not enjoy inner stability. They had sullied their souls with selfish desires and their reform movement was nothing but another manifestation of their selfish interests. They forgot that the transience of their life would not be the end of the story. Rather, their ‘so-called reform’ would be left as a destructive heritage for future generations to inherit. An apt manifestation of such a reform movement is ‘the Renaissance’, which instead of bringing life to the nations, created a foundation for the destruction of the future generations. The spiritual crisis in the Western world partly reflects this contention.

The Holy Qur’ān says:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لاَ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ. أَلاَ إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلٰكِنْ لاَ يَشْعُرُونَ .

“And when it said to them, do not create disequilibrium (mischief) in the earth, they say verily we are reformers. Mind, they themselves are mischief mongers, but they are not aware.”(۱)

This is a very dangerous state, for the hypocrites believe that they really are reformers [after engaging in repetitive ills and losing their power of identifying the elements of equilibrium and disequilibrium]. This reflects their compound ignorance. They imagine that they are reformers and have conviction about the matter whereas in reality, they are mischief mongers.

The following are verses from the Holy Qur’ān and traditions that underline the

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۱- Holy Qur’ān, ۲:۱۱-۱۲

essential requisite of self-reform before one ever tries to embark upon reforming others:

۱. Almighty Allāh says in chapter ۱۰, verse ۳۵:

أَفَـمَنْ يَهْدِى إِلَـى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّنْ لاَ يَهِدِّى إِلاَّ أَنْ يُهْدَى .

“…Is He then Who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go aright unless he is guided?”

Readers should not limit ‘guidance’ just to conceptual knowledge that one acquires after having been taught what is right and wrong. Rather ‘guidance’ is a change of the previous state of deviation. When one follows the religion properly and rectifies his previous state, then only can he be known to be guided.

۲. Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said:

عَجِبْتُ لِمَنْ يَتَصَدَّى لِإِصْلاَحِ النَّاسِ وَنَفْسُهُ أَشَدُّ شَيْ ءٍ فَسَاداً فَلاَ يُصْلِحُهَا وَيَتَعَاطَى إِصْلاَحَ غَيْرِهِ.

“I am surprised at one who takes charge of reforming the people while his soul is in greater need of reform, and he does not reform it but undertakes to reform others.”(۱)

۳. Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said:

إِنْ سَمَتْ هِمَّتُكَ لِإِصْلاَحِ النَّاسِ فَابْدَأْ بِنَفْسِكَ، فَإِنَّ تَعَاطِيكَ صَلاَحَ غَيْرِكَ وَأَنْتَ فَاسِدٌ أَكْبَرُ الْعَيْبِ.

“If your aspiration rises to reform the people, then start with your self, because your mission to reform other than yourself while you are corrupt is the greatest of deficiencies.”(۲)

۴. Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said:

مَنْ لَمْ يُصْلِحْ نَفْسَهُ لَمْ يُصْلِحْ غَيْرَهُ.

“Whosoever does not reform himself would not reform others.”(۳)

The Reality of Self–Reform

Having understood the fundamental requisite of self-reform, let us now try to .understand its reality

p: ۹۳

Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim, tr. ۴۸۵۳, pg. ۲۴۰ -۱

Ibid., tr. ۴۷۶۵, pg. ۲۳۷ -۲

Ibid., tr. ۴۷۷۲, pg. ۲۳۷ -۳

What is ‘islāh al-nafs’ (self-reform) in its real sense? As understood earlier, the word ‘islāh’ stands for ‘effecting equilibrium [in an entity].’ Therefore ‘Islāh al-nafs’ would ?mean ‘effecting equilibrium in the soul.’ And when does a soul enjoy its equilibrium

To respond to this query we must understand the basic faculties of our souls. The soul :of the human being possesses the following three main faculties

(The Reality of the Intellect (al-quwwat al-’aqliyyah -١

(The Faculty of Desire (al-quwwat al-shahwiyyah -٢

(The Faculty of Anger (al-quwwat al-ghadabiyyah -٣

If the faculty of intellect does not deviate towards the directions of excess (ifrāt) or negligence (tafrīt) and the faculties of desire and anger are subservient to the faculty of the intellect, the soul would enjoy its equilibrium. And this, according to some ethicians is the state of ‘adālah (equilibrium). The esteemed mystic Mullā Hādi Sabzawārī in his excellent commentary of Du‘ā Jawshan al-Kabīr, called Sharh al-:Asmā’ says

إنَّ لِلإِنْسَانِ ثَلَاث قِوى: قوّهٌ دَرَّاكَهٌ، وقُوّهٌ شَهْوِيَّهٌ، وقوّهٌ غَضَبيّهٌ، فَانْحِرَافُ الْقُوّهِ الدَرَّاكَهِ مِنْهُ إِلى جَانِبَى الإِفْرَاطِ وَالتَّفْرِيطِ يُسَمَّى (جُرْبُزَه) وَ (بَلَاهَه) وَاعْتِدَالُهَا (حِكْمَهٌ)، وَانْحِرَافُ الْقُوَّهِ الشَّهْوِيَّهِ إِلى طَرَفَي الإِفْرَاطِ وَالتَّفْرِيطِ يُسَمّى (شَرَهًا) وَ (خُمُوْدًا) وَاعْتِدَالُهَا (عِفّهٌ)، وَانْحِرَافُ الْقُوّهِ الْغَضَبيّهِ إِلى حَدَّى الإِفْرَاطِ وَالتَّفْرِيطِ يُسَمّى (تَهَوُّرًا) وَ (جُبْنَاً) وَاعْتِدَالُهَا شُجَاعَهٌ. وَهُذَا الإِعْتِدَالُ هُوَ الْمُسَمَّى (بِالْعَدَالَهِ) وَهُوَ الصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيْمُ الَّذِى هُوَ أَحَدُّ مِنَ السَّيْفِ وَ أَدَقُّ مِنَ الشَّعْرِ...

:[Surely the human being has three faculties [of the soul“

- (The faculty of comprehension (sometimes known as faculty of intellection
- The faculty of appetite
- (The faculty of anger (also translated as the irascible faculty

The

deviation of the faculty of comprehension towards the two directions of excess and negligence are called jurbuzah (deception) and balāhah (silliness) respectively, and its state of equilibrium is known as al-hikmah (wisdom);

The deviation of the faculty of appetite towards the two directions of excess and negligence is called sharah (gluttony) and khumūd (stillness) respectively, while its state of equilibrium is known as al-'iffah (temperance/chastity);

The the deviation of the faculty of anger towards the directions of excess and negligence is known as tahawwur (recklessness) and jubnah (cowardice) respectively, whereas its state of equilibrium is called al-shujā'a (courage/bravery).

And this state of al-i'tidāl (equilibrium of the aforementioned three faculties) is called al-'adālah (justice) and it is the straight path (sirāt al-mustaqīm) which is sharper than the sword and thinner than hair... "(١)

In order to have a better picture of what Mullā is trying to say, let us look at what Mullā Fayd Kashānī has to say in his al-Mahajjat al-Baydā':

...أمّا قوّةُ العِلْمِ فَحُسْنُهَا وَ صَلاَحُهَا فِيْ أَنْ تَصِيْرَ بِحَيْثُ يَسْهُلُ لَهَا دَرْكُ الْفَرْقِ بَيْنَ الصِّدْقِ وَالْكِذْبِ فِى الأَقْوَالِ وَبَيْنَ الْحَقِّ وَالْبَاطِلِ فِى الإِعْتِقَادَاتِ وَبَيْنَ الْجَمِيْلِ وَالْقَبِيْحِ فِى الأَفْعَالِ فَإِذَا تَحَصَّلَتْ هٰذِهِ الْقُوَّه حَصَلَ مِنْهَا ثَمَرَةُ الْحِكْمَهِ وَالْحِكْمَهُ رَأْسُ الأَخْلاَقِ الْحَسَنَهِ وَهِيَ الَّتِى قَالَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى فِيْهَا وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَهُ فَقَدْ أُوْتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا وَإِمّا قوّةُ الْغَضَبِ فَحُسْنُهَا فِيْ أَنْ يَقْتَصِرَ اِنْقِبَاضُهَا وَاِنْبِسَاطُهَا عَلى حَدِّ مَا تَقْتَضِيْهِ الْحِكْمَهُ، وَكَذٰلِكَ الشَّهْوَهُ حُسْنُهَا وَصَلاَحُهَا فِى أَنْ تَكُوْنَ تَحْتَ إِشَارَهِ الْحِكْمَهِ أَعْنِى إِشَارَهُ الْعَقْلِ وَ الدِّيْنِ، وَأَمَا قُوَّهُ الْعَدْلِ فَهِىَ فِى ضَبْطِ قُوَّهِ الْغَضَبِ وَالشَّهْوَهِ

p: ٩٥

١- Sharhu'l Asmā ' al-Husnā, pg. ٢١٣

تَحْتَ إِشَارَهِ الْعَقْلِ وَالشَّرْعِ ...

The rational faculty is sound and good when it is easily able to discriminate, that is, to“ distinguish honesty from lies in speech, truth from falsehood in questions of belief, and beauty from ugliness in actions. When this faculty is sound it bears fruit in the form of wisdom, which is the chief of the good traits of character, and regarding which God has said, And whosoever is granted wisdom has truly been granted abundant good. Regarding the faculty of anger, this is sound when its movements lie within the bounds required by wisdom. Likewise, the faculty of desire is sound and good when it is under the command of the religion and the intellect. As for the faculty to effect a just equilibrium, it is this which sets desire and anger under the command of the (intellect and the religion…”(١)

:Ethicians also quote a tradition that refers to the aforementioned reality

:Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said

أَلْفَضَائِلُ أَرْبَعَهُ أَجْنَاسٍ: أَحَدُهَا الْحِكْمَهُ وَقِوَامُهَا فِی الْفِكْرَهِ، وَالثَّانِی الْعِفَّهُ وَقِوَامُهَا فِی الشَّهْوَهِ، وَالثَّالِثُ الْقُوَّهُ وَقِوَامُهَا فِی الْغَضَبِ، وَالرَّابِعُ الْعَدْلُ وَقِوَامُهُ فِی اِعْتِدَالِ قِوَی النَّفْسِ.

Virtues are four kinds: The first is wisdom (al-hikmah) which is sustained by“ intellection (al-fikrah), the second is the temperance (al-‘iffah) which is sustained by desires (al-shahwah), the third is power (al-quwwah) which is sustained by anger (al-ghadab), and the fourth is justice (‘adālah) which is sustained by the equilibrium of the (faculties of the soul.”(٢)

The equilibrium of the soul can be achieved by following

Mawlā Muhsin Fayd Kāshānī, al-Mahajjat al-Baydā ‘, v. ۵ -١

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ٧۵, pg. ٨١ -٢

the Holy Qur’ān and the Sunnah, which cover Islamic Ideology, Islamic ethics, Islamic law, etc. We must remember however, that equilibrium has different levels. And in order to find one’s way to the higher levels one needs a qualified guide for proper direction, since there is always the danger of stumbling and falling. However, as mentioned earlier, it is possible for a very few to traverse the journey without the direct guidance of a specific master.

The Grand Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī says:

ابـدال در اصـطلاح سالکانی هسـتند که تحت تدبیر شـخص معین نیسـتند. و از آنها بعنوان ((مفرِد) یا ((مفرَد)) یاد می شود چه این که اینها راه را به تنهائی طی می کنند. گرچه سـخت است ولی رفتنی است و گرچه پیشـرفت انسان تحت نظر مدیر و مدبر بیشتر است، لکن بتنهائی هم می توان طی طریق نمود

“Abdāl technically stands for those wayfarers on the path of God who are not trained by a specific master. They are also called “mufrid” or “mufrad” This is because they traverse the path by themselves. Despite this being difficult it can be traversed, and although the human being progresses farther under the tutelage of a master and supervisor, one can still traverse the path by himself.”(۱)

He also narrates:

وقتی از عارفی پرسـیدند: ((ابدال)) چند نفرند؟ فرمود: ((اَرْبَعُوْنَ نَفْسًا)) ابدال چهل تن هسـتند، و سوال کردند که: چرا نگفتید: ((اَرْبَعُوْنَ رَجُلًا))، چهل مردنـد، و گفتیـد چهل نفس هسـتند؟ در جواب گفت: اولاً: همه این بزرگان مرد نیسـتند، بلکه در بین آنان زنان هستند. و ثانیاً: کسی

۱- Zan dar Āineye Jalāl o Jamāl, pg. ۲۳۳

که به مقام ابدال نائل می آید انسان است و انسان بودن اختصاص به زن یا مرد ندارد.

When a saint was asked how many are the ‘abdāl’? He responded by saying,“ ‘Arba‘ūna nafsan’ (۴۰ souls). He was asked: Why did you say ‘forty souls’ instead of ‘forty men’? He responded: ‘Firstly: not all of these great personalities are men; rather, we also have women among them’; and secondly: whosoever attains the station of the abdāl is ‘a human being [in the true sense of the word]’, and being (human is not restricted to men.”(۱)

Seeking the support and intercession of the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny who enjoy proximity to God and who always stand unparalleled, can enable one to :soar very high. In fact some great saints have said things worthy of reflection

۱. The late saint Āyatullāh Sayyid Hāshim al-Mūsawī reports Āyatullāh al-’Uzmā Sayyid ‘Alī Qādī al-Tabātabā’ī, the spiritual mentor of ‘Allāmah al-Tabātabā’ī to have :said

قَالَ لِی أُسْتَاذِیْ الْمَرْحُوْم اَلْقَاضِیْ قُدِّسَ سِرّهُ: أَنَّهُ مُحَالٌ أَنْ یَصِلَ إِنْسَانٌ إِلی مَقَامِ التَّوْحِیْدِ بِدُوْنِ طَرِیْقِ سَیِّدِ الشُّهَداءِ عَلَیْهِ السَّلَامِ.

My teacher, Marhūm Qādī (may his spirit be sanctified) said to me that it is impossible“ for a human being to attain the station of tawhīd [proximity to God] without the path (of Sayyid al-Shuhadā.”(۲)

۲. Āyatullāh Muhammad Husayn Tehrānī in his ‘spirit Immaterial’ narrates that Sayyid :‘Alī Qādī Tabātabā’ī said

وصول به مقام توحید و سیر صحیح الی الله و عرفان ذات احدیت عزّ اسمُه بدون ولایت امامان شیعه و خلفای به

۱- Ibid.

۲- Ārifun Fī al-Rihāb al-Qudsiyya, pg. ۴۷‘

حق از علی بن ابی طالب (ع) و فرزندانش از بتول عذراء محال است

"It is impossible to attain the station of Divine unity and traverse correctly towards God and attain the knowledge of the His Unique Essence (Invincible is His Name), without the guardianship of the Shī'ah Imāms (upon whom be peace) and the true Caliphs starting from 'Alī bin Abī Tālib and his progeny through the Batūl-e-'Adhrā' (Hadrat Fātima (as))."(۱)

۳. 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī, the author of al-Mīzān, is reported to have said:

آن حضرت (امام الحسین (ع)) را برای رفع حجاب و موانع طریق نسبت به سالکین راه خدا عنایتی عظیم است

"That Hadrat [i.e. Imām Husayn (as)] has great attention towards the wayfarers of the path of God in removing the veil and impediments on the path of God."(۲)

۴. Āyatullāh Qādī Tabātabā'ī, the spiritual mentor of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī is reported to have said:

اگر من به جائی رسیده باشم از دو چیز است:(۱) قرآن کریم, (۲) زیارت سید الشهداء

"If I have attained any station, it is by two things: (۱) The Noble Qur'ān, and (۲) Ziyārah of Sayyid al-Shuhadā' [Doyen of the Martyrs]."(۳)

۵. Sayyid 'Ādil al-'Alawī, quotes his late mentor, the pious Shi'ite Marja', Āyatullāh al-'Uzmā Shahāb al-Dīn al-Najafī al-Mar'ashī as having advised him as follows:

إِذاَ اَرَدْتَ التَّوْفِيْقَ فِىْ حَيَاتِـكَ الْعِلْمِيَّهِ فَعَلَيْـكَ بِثَلاَثَهِ أَعْمَـالٍ: الأَوَّلُ: كُنْ دَوْماً عَلىَ طَهَارَهٍ وَوُضُوْءٍ فَإِنَّهُ يُنِيْرُ الْقَلْبِ وَيُزِيْلُ الْهَمّ. الثَّانِى: شَيِّعْ الْجَنَائِزَ اَىّ جَنَازَهٍ رَأَيْتَهَا وَلَوْ بِأَقْدَامٍ. الثَّالِثُ: شَارِكْ فِىْ قَضِيَّهِ الْحُسَيْن عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمِ بِأَىِّ نَحْوٍ مِنَ الْمُشَارَكَهِ. ثُمّ قَالَ: كُنْتُ مِنْ مُدَرِّسِى الْحَوْزَهِ الْمَعْرُوْفِيْنَ، وَكُنْتُ

۱- Rūhe Mujarrad, pg. ۳۲۹

۲- Daryāye 'Irfān, pg. ۹۷

۳- Ibid., pg. ۹۸

آنَذاکَ أَوَزِّعُ الشَّایَ عَلی النّاسِ فِی الْمَجالِسِ وَالْمآتِمِ الْحُسَیْنِیَّه.

If you would like divine succor (tawfīq) in your intellectual and practical life, you“ :should practice the following three acts

Always be in the state of purity and wuḍū’, for that illumines the heart and removes (١) .anguish

Escort the dead body, whoever it may be [among the Muslims], even for a few (٢) .steps

Participate in the matter of Husayn (as) [i.e. any ceremony that concerns his (٣) [exalted personality

Then he said to me: I was one of the well-known professors of the Islamic Seminary; and during that period I would distribute tea to the people who attended ceremonies (for mourning Imām Husayn (as).”(١)

Scholars of ethics and gnosis have produced thought provoking works about the path to self-reform. However, the limited scope of this commentary does not allow the author to delve into all the details of this path. Nevertheless, God willing, we shall try .to cover some of the significant rudimentary stations of wayfaring very soon

In short, one must reflect on the following tradition: both the Shī‘ah as well as Sunnī :narrators of tradition quote that the Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said

إِنِّی تارِکٌ فِیْکُمُ الثَّقَلَیْنِ ما إِنْ تَمَسَّکْتُمْ بِهِما لَنْ تَضِلُّوْا بَعْدِی: کِتابَ اللّٰهِ وَعِتْرَتِی أَهْلَ بَیْتِی.

I leave behind you the two weighty things; if you hold fast unto them you will never...“ (go astray after me: The Book of Allāh and my Progeny...”(٢)

.This, in short, is the path to self-reform. But it is not as easy as it seems

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Qabasāt min Hayāti Sayyidina al-Ustādh, pg. ١١٨ -١

al-Ihtijāj, v. ۲, pg. ۳۸۰ -۲

Try to reflect on “holding fast” and its true extensions and you will come to understand .what self-reform entails

Waking Up: The First Stage of Self-Reform

Scholars of ‘irfān (gnosis) introduce ‘yaqzah’ (wakefulness) as the first step on the path toward self-reform. So long as the human being is attached to the material world, and oblivious of the purpose of his creation, he is fast asleep. He needs to be woken up in order to begin the journey to Almighty Allāh. Allāh (swt) addressing His :Noble Messenger in chapter Saba, verse ۴۶ says

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَعِظُكُمْ بِوَاحِدَةٍ أَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مَثْنَى وَفُرَادَى .

Say [O Prophet of Allāh] I exhort you only to one word: rise for Allāh, in pairs and“ ”...alone

Khwājah ‘Abdullāh Ansārī, in his monumental work of practical gnosis, Manāzil as-Sā’irīn (the Dwellings of the Wayfarers), which is a text studied by many of the :wayfarers on the path of God, after quoting the above verse says

القَوْمَهُ لِلَّهِ هِیَ الْيَقَظَهُ مِنْ سِنَهِ الْغَفْلَهِ، وَالنُّهُوْضُ عَنْ وَرَطَهِ الْفَتْرَهِ. وَهِیَ أَوَّلُ مَا يَسْتَنِيرُ قَلْبُ الْعَبْدُ بالْحَيَاهِ لِرُؤْيَهِ نُوْرِ التَّنْبِيْهِ .

To rise for Allāh [as indicated in the verse] means to wake up from the sleep of“ heedlessness (ghaflah) and rise up from the entanglement of lassitude; and that is the first illumination of the heart of the servant with [true] life due to perceiving the (light of awakening (tanbīh).”(۱

When the human being wakes up from the slumber of his heedlessness, his imaginative life subsides and his true life begins. His entire past, which was filled with ‘mundane aspirations’ collapses, and

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Manāzil al-Sā’irīn, ch. ۱ , pg. ۳۶ -۱

he starts experiencing a life, which would benefit him eternally. So important is this step, the experts of practical gnosis (al-'irfān al-'amalī) believe that yaqzah is: "the first step of wayfaring towards Allāh, and in fact, the foundation of the journey to God."(1)

The late Āyatullāh Khumaynī, who was also known as an authority in gnosis ('irfān), at one time advised the seminarians in Najaf as follows:

تا کی می خواهید در خواب غفلت به سر برید، و در فساد و تباهی غوطه ور باشید؟ از خدا بترسید از عواقب امور بپرهیزید از خواب غفلت بیدار شوید. شما هنوز بیدار نشده اید هنوز قدم اول را برنداشته اید. قدم اول در سلوک «یقظه» است. ولی شما در خواب به سر می برید چشمها باز و دلها در خواب فرو رفته است.

"How long do you wish to remain in the sleep of negligence, steeped in corruption? Fear God! Beware of the consequence of your deeds! Wake up from the sleep of negligence! You have not yet awakened. You have not yet taken the first step. The first step of wayfaring is yaqzah (awakening), but you are still asleep. Your eyes may be open, but your hearts are asleep..."(2)

And in his well-known ethical manual Chehel Hadith (Forty Traditions) he says:

منزل اوّل انسانیت «یقظه» است. و آن بیدار شدن از خواب غفلت و هشیار شدن از سکر طبیعت است، و فهمیدن اینکه انسان مسافر است، و هر مسافر زاد و راحله می خواهد. زاد و راحله انسان خصال خود انسان است .

"The first stage of humanness (insāniyyat) is yaqzah. It signifies the...

p: ۱۰۲

۱- Maqālāt- Tarīqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiyeh (1), pg. ۲۴

۲- Jihād-e Akbar, pg. ۵۱

awakening from the slumber of negligence and the intoxication of physical nature, and the realization hat man is a traveler, and like any other traveler, he needs some provisions for this journey. His morality and character are his provisions for this journey..."(۱)

بـدان که اول منزل از منازل انسانیت منزل یقظه و بیداری است، چنانچه مشایخ اهل سـلوک در منازل سالکان بیان فرموده اند . و از برای این منزل، چنـانچه شـیخ عظیم الشأن شـاه آبادی، دام ظله، بیان فرمودنـد، ده بیت است که اکنون در مقام تعـداد آن نیستیم .

"Remember that the first step towards humanness is that of awareness and... awakening (yaqzah), as mentioned by the leading mystics (mashāyikh) concerning the stages of wayfaring. There are ten stages in this step, as elaborated by the great Shaykh Shāhābadī, which we are not in a position to enumerate here..."(۲)

Now, how and when is yaqzah achieved? How does the human being wake up from his long slumber? And what is the source of this spark of wakefulness?

The Holy Qur'ān and the teachings of the Sunnah inform us that the source of this noble spark is Almighty Allāh. It is He who wakes the slumbering human being and enables him to start this significant journey of eternal salvation:

۱. Almighty Allāh says in chapter ۴, verse ۷۹:

مَا أَصَابَکَ مِنْ حَسَنَهٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ .

"Whatever good befalls you is from Allāh."

۲. And in chapter chapter ۱۶, verse ۵۳ He says:

وَ مَا بِکُمْ مِنْ نِعْمَهٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ .

"Whatever blessing you have is from Allāh..."

۳. In the

Chehel Hadīth, tr. Four, On Kibr pp. ٩٧-٩٨ -١

Ibid., tr. Ten - On Desire and Hope -٢

:morning supplication of “al-Sabāh”, Imām ‘Alī (as) cries

إِلٌهِی إِنْ لَمْ تَبْتَدِئْنِی الرَّحْمَه مِنْکَ بِحُسْنِ التَّوْفِیْقِ، فَمَنِ السَّالِکُ بِی إِلَیْکَ فِیْ وَاضِحِ الطَّرِیْقِ؟

O God, if Mercy from You does not begin with fair success for me, then who can take“ (me to You upon the evident path?”(۱

:Imām Zayn al-’Ābidīn (as) in his supplication of praise says .۴

...ثُمَّ سَلَکَ بِهِمْ طَرِیقَ إِرَادَتِهِ وَبَعَثَهُمْ فِی سَبِیلِ مَحَبَّتِهِ...

Then He made them walk on the path of His desire, and sent them out on the way of“ ”.His love

:Sulaymān bin Khālid narrates that Imām Ja’far al-Sādiq (as) [once] said to him .۵

یا سُلَیْمَانُ إِنَّ لَکَ قَلْباً وَمَسَامِعَ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ إِذاَ أَرَادَ أَنْ یَهْدِیَ عَبْدًا فَتَحَ مَسَامِعَ قَلْبِهِ وَإِذاَ أَرَادَ بِهِ غَیْرَ ذلِکَ خَتَمَ مَسَامِعَ قَلْبِهِ فَلاَ یَصْلُحُ أَبَدًا وَهُوَ قَوْلُ اللُّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: أَمْ عَلى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفالُها .

O Sulaymān, surely you have a heart and the sense of hearing, and certainly when“ Allāh wants to guide a servant, He opens the ears of his heart; but when He wants other than that for him, He closes the ears of his heart, as a result of which he can never attain the state of his equilibrium; and to this does the following speech of God (allude: ‘Or are there locks upon their hearts?’” [۴۷:۲۴](۲

In fact, the entire Qur’ān has been sent down in order to awaken the human being. Almighty Allāh teaches His servants to reflect and ponder over the verses of the Qur’ān so that they can attain the state of wakefulness. Look at the

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Mafātīh al-Jinān, Du‘ā al-Sabāh, Arabic ed., pg. ۹۳-۹۴ -۱
Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۵, pg. ۲۰۳ -۲

:following verses

:In Sūrat Sād (۳۸), verse ۲۹, He says .۱

.کِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْکَ مُبَارَکٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُوْلُوا الأَلْبَابِ .

It is] a blessed Book that We have sent down to you, so that they may contemplate]"
".its verses, and that those who possess intellect may take admonition

:And in chapter ۱۴, verse ۱, He says .۲

.الر. کِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْکَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلـی النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلـی صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ .

Alif, Lām, Rā; This is a Book We sent down unto you so that you bring mankind out of" darkness into light by their Lord's permission, to the path of the All-mighty, the All-
".laudable

:And in chapter ۴۷, verse ۲۴, He says .۳

.أَفَلاَ يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا .

"?Do they not then ponder over the Qur'ān or are there locks upon their hearts"

The reason, we are told, why many are still asleep, is their unpreparedness for receiving the Divine spark. Due to their continual sinning, they have erected barriers in their hearts, and thus are not receptive and cannot wake up from their slumber of heedlessness. So long as they have not 'locked their hearts ' as explained in the previous tradition and [not] lost their discerning spirit and 'innate nature' [like those hypocrites and disbelievers referred to in verses ۷ ۱۸ of Sūrat al-Baqarah] they still have the opportunity to change, and they should not despair. Rather, while trying to prepare themselves to attain this fundamental state by pondering over the verses of
,the Holy Qur'ān

they should be steadfast in refraining from sin and should obey the laws of Almighty Allāh and perpetually pray for the state of wakefulness.

Imām Husayn (as) in his well-known supplication of 'Arafah cries:

إِلٰهِی أُطْلُبْنِی بِرَحْمَتِکَ حَتّی أَصِلَ إِلَیْکَ، وَاجْذُبْنِیْ بِمَنِّکَ حَتّی أُقْبِلَ إِلَیْکَ .

"O God, Seek me by Your Mercy until I reach You and attract me by Your Favor until I draw towards You."(1)

Additionally, the aspirants of wakefulness should refrain from those makrūhāt [abominable deeds] that blur the heart and the intellect from comprehension and should engage themselves in activities that quicken the process of the soul's enlightenment. The following traditions are worthy of reflection:

1. Imām 'Alī (as) is reported to have said:

إِسْتَدِیْمُوا الذِّکْرَ، فَإِنَّهُ یُنِیرُ الْقَلْبَ، وَهُوَ أَفْضَلُ الْعِبَادَهِ.

"Be constant in the remembrance of God (dhikr), for that enlightens the heart, and it is the best worship."(2)

Readers should note that 'dhikr' must always accompany attention, otherwise it would not have its desired effect. Remembrance of Allāh can be attained by strengthening one's belief in His Omnipresence. When the supplicant is always mindful that there is someone Infinitely Supreme who witnesses each and every act and thought of his, he would refrain from sin.

2. Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ لِلْقُلُوبِ صَدَأً کَصَدَأِ النُّحَاسِ، فَاجْلُوهَا بِالإِسْتِغْفَارِ.

"Surely there is corrosion for the hearts like the corrosion of copper; therefore burnish them by seeking God's forgiveness."(3)

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

لَا تُكْثِرُوا الْكَلَامَ بغَيْرِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ، فَإِنَّ كَثْرَةَ الْكَلَامِ بِغَيْرِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تُقْسِی الْقُلُوبَ، وَإِنَّ أَبْعَدَ

۱- Mafatīh al-Jinān, Du'ā 'Arafah

۲- Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim, tr. ۳۶۵۴

۳- Muntakhab Mīzān al-Hikmah, pg. ۴۳۲, tr. ۵۳۵۷

النَّاسِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْقَاسِى الْقَلْبِ.

Do not talk much about that which concerns other than the remembrance of Allāh,“ for that hardens the heart; and surely the most remote from Allāh among the people (is the one who possesses a hard heart.”(١)

:Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said .۴

الْبُكَاءُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ يُنِيرُ الْقَلْبَ وَيَعْصِمُ مِنْ مُعَاوَدَهِ الذَّنْبِ.

Weeping out of the fear of Allāh, enlightens the heart and prevents [one] from“ (repeating sin.”(٢)

We should understand that ‘khashyah’ which is translated as fear should not be] taken to merely mean ‘the conventional fear’ that we know of. ‘Khashyah’, according :to Rāghib al-Isfahānī, is

خَوْفٌ يَشُوْبُهُ تَعْظِيْمٌ.

(fear mixed with veneration.’(٣‘

And this can only be achieved after knowing God. At the onset our duty is to know God and His Beautiful Attributes even in the conceptual and intellectual level. For every heart, which accepts the truth, this can be a catalyst for achieving the higher levels of ma’rifah, and consequently, the higher levels of khashyah as well. Therefore, it is incumbent to introduce and inculcate in oneself the basic knowledge of the roots of religion, especially tawhīd, so that one can naturally experience the fear of Allāh with .veneration for His Exalted Essence

:The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said .۵

لاَ تُمِيتُوا الْقُلُوبَ بِكَثْرَهِ الطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَاب، فَإِنَّ الْقُلُوْبَ تَمُوْتُ كَالزُّرُوْعِ إِذَا كَثُرَ عَلَيْهِ الْمَاءُ.

Do not deaden your hearts by a lot of food and drink for surely the hearts die like“ (plantations if a lot of water is put on them.”(۴

Imām .۶

۱- Ibid., pg. ۴۳۱, tr. ۵۳۳۳

۲- Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim, tr. ۳۷۳۰

۳- al-Mufradāt, new ed., pg. ۲۸۳

۴- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۶۳, pg. ۳۳۱

:Ja’far al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said

...طَلَبْتُ نُورَ الْقَلْبِ فَوَجَدْتُهُ فِی التَّفَکُّرِ وَالْبُکَاءِ...

I sought for the light of the heart and found it in reflection and weeping [for those..." (things that one should weep for such as regret of sin, etc.]..."(۱)

:Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) is reported to have advised Jābir al-Ju’fī as follows .۷

اِسْتَجْلِبْ شِدَّةَ التَّيَقُّظِ بِصِدْقِ الْخَوْفِ.

".Attract extreme wakefulness by true fear"

And true fear of God can only be achieved when one has knowledge of Allāh and His Sublime Attributes. And the beginning of’knowledge’ is conceptual knowledge: knowledge by the intellect. Then comes presential knowledge (al-‘ilm al-hudurī), when .the spirit reaches its height

:The Holy Prophet (s) in a lengthy tradition says .۸

... وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ عَلِيًّا بَعَثَ اللَّهُ مَلَكَ الْمَوْتِ إِلَيْهِ بِرِفْقٍ، وَدَفَعَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَنْهُ هَوْلَ مُنْكِرٍ وَنَكِيرٍ، وَنَوَّرَ قَلْبَهُ، وَبَيَّضَ وَجْهَهُ ...

And whosoever loves ‘Alī, Allāh (swt) would send the Angel of death to him in a" friendly manner and remove from him the fear of Munkir and Nakīr and enlighten his (heart and whiten his face..."(۲)

As pointed out much earlier, it is important to understand what kind of ‘hubb’ of ‘Alī is spoken about in this radiant tradition. Obviously it is not an evanescent emotional pull. :For a better understanding of this, look at the following tradition

عَنْ أَبِی عُبَيْدَه عَنْ أَبِی جَعْفَر (ع) قَالَ: مَنْ أَحَبَّنَا فَهُوَ مِنَّا أَهْلِ الْبَيْتِ. قُلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ! مِنْكُمْ؟ قَالَ: مِنَّا وَاللَّهِ، أَمَا سَمِعْتَ قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (ع): فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِی فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّی ؟.

Abū ‘Ubaydah is reported to have said that Imām"

Mustadrak al-Wasā'il, v. ١٢, pg. ١٧٣ -١

Bihār al-Anwār, pg. ٢٧٧ -٢

Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) said: “Whosoever loves us then he is from us the Ahlu’l Bayt (as).” Abū ‘Ubaydah said: “May I be made your ransom; “from you [the Ahl al- Bayt (as)]?” Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) responds: “[yes] from us, I swear by Allāh; have you not heard the statement of Prophet Ibrāhīm (as): Then whosoever follows me, [then verily he is from me.” [Sūrat Ibrāhim, v. ۳۶

This tradition is narrative of a love that is concordant with following the Ahlu’l Bayt (as). Were we to ponder a little more, we would come to understand true love is the unity of the lover with the beloved. The veracity of one’s claim of the love of Ahlu’l Bayt (as) becomes apparent when one reflects their attributes in one’s own .personality. Readers are requested to ponder over this point carefully

!Fudayl Wakes Up

History informs us of people who, at a sensitive moment of their lives, woke up from their deep slumber, and underwent a transformation that became the foundation of .their eternal salvation. One such person was Fudayl bin ‘Ayyād

In the beginning Fudayl was well-known as a caravan robber. He would stop different caravans in the middle of their journeys and would steal from them whatever he desired. However, it is said that he would not transgress the limits by hurting anyone or leaving them with no provisions to reach their destination... Once he got in love with a certain woman, and headed for her house. While climbing the wall of her house, he happened

to hear the following verse of Qur’ān from someone who was reciting the Qur’ān in :the neighborhood

.أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ... .

Has the time not yet come for the believers that their hearts turn humble for the“ (remembrance of Allāh…?”(١

:On listening to this verse, he underwent a transformation and cried

Yā Rabbī qad āna

!O Lord, the time indeed has come

Thereafter he left the place and returned back and adopted a path of detachment from the world and self-reform. It is also said that he had a son called ‘Alī who was higher than him in rank in terms of detachment, worship and self-reform; however, he did not live for long. One day while he was standing near the spring of Zamzam in :Masjid al-Harām he heard the following verses of Qur’ān from someone nearby

.وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِى الأَصْفَادِ. سَرَابِيلُهُمْ مِنْ قَطِرَانٍ وَتَغْشَى وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ .

And you will see the guilty on that day linked together in chains. Their shirts made of“ (pitch and the fire covering their faces.”(٢

(On hearing this verse, he fell down and died.(٣

Such changes do not happen for all. One must prepare himself or herself in order to be overtaken by the Divine Grip. Despite Fudayl’s evil attitude, he must have had qualities that enabled him to be receptive and wake up from his slumber. We should not imagine that wakefulness is reserved for a certain class, and others are deprived :of the same. The following universal law sums it up

The Holy Qur’ān, ۵۷:۱۶ -۱

The Holy Qur’ān, ۱۴:۴۹ ۵۰ -۲

Maqālāt- Tarīqe ‘Amaliyyeye Tazkiyeh (۱), pp. ۲۹-۳۰ -۳

...لَـهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَ عَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ... .

"...For it (i.e. the soul) is what it has earned, and against it is what it has earned...."(1)

Therefore one should struggle to refine his heart and prepare it for the first spark to ignite.

The Ahlu'l Bayt (as) – Intermediaries of Allāh's Grace

Seeking the support of the Holy Prophet (s) and his sinless progeny (upon whom be peace) can also be very helpful in igniting the spark of wakefulness. Rather, as we pointed out earlier,'it is impossible for one to attain the heights of perfection without their support.' This is because the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) are the intermediaries of Allāh's Grace. Every thing that anyone possesses originates from Almighty Allāh, but passes through them. This should in no way make us think that they bestow grace independently, for every unit of the world of contingent existence entirely subsists by Allāh, including the noble beings of the Prophets (as) and Imāms (as).

Imām 'Alī (as) is reported to have said:

إِنَّا صَنَايِعُ رَبِّنَا، وَالنَّاسُ بَعْدُ صَنَايِعُ لَنَا.

"We are the handicrafts of our Lord and the people then are our handicrafts."(2)

Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said:

نَحْنُ السَّبَبُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ اللّٰهِ تَعَالى.

"We are the intermediary between you and Allāh."(3)

Look at the following verses of the famous Ziyārah of Jāmi'ah for a better understanding of the significant role played by the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny (as):

مَنْ أَرَادَ اللّٰهَ بَدَأَ بِكُمْ.

"Whosoever seeks Allāh begins through you."

وَمَنْ قَصَدَهُ تَوَجَّهَ بِكُمْ .

(And whosoever intends Him pays attention to Him by means of you.(۴)

Therefore the light of wakefulness

۱- The Holy Qur'ān, ۲:۲۸۶

۲- Nahj al-Balāghah, letter ۲۸. Al-Khu'ī in his Minhāj al-Barā'ah, a comprehensive commentary on the Nahj al-Balaghah says: Imām by his statement wannāsu sanāyi 'un lanā (and the people are our handicrafts) meant that they are the intermediaries of Almighty Allāh's grace (Mīrzā Habībullāh al-Hāshimī al-Khū'ī, Minhāj al-Barā'ah, vol.۹, pg. ۹۸)

۳- Āyatullāh Hasan Zādeh Āmulī quotes Bishārat al-Mustafā, pg. ۹۰ in his gloss over the Minhāj al-Barā'ah of al-Khū'ī

۴- Mafātīh al-Jinān, Arabic ed., pp. ۶۲۰-۶۲۶

originates from Allāh but passes through the station of wilāyah (which the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny occupy by Allāh's permission).

Past history has manifested this fact in different places. An example of such light of wakefulness can be seen in the personality of Zuhayr bin Qayn, who is counted as one of the highly esteemed supporters of Sayyid al-Shuhadā' (as) in the plains of Karbalā'. At the onset he was among those who disliked confronting the Imām (as). Later however he is said to have woken up by the Imām's (as) special attention.

The Spark Ignited by Imām al-Husayn (as) in Zuhayr!

The companions of Zuhayr narrate:

During the very days when Imām Husayn (as) left Makkah for Kūfah, we were also leaving Makkah with Zuhayr. Due to the path being the same between the stopovers on our way, we would reach the gathering of the Imām (as) but try to remain aloof from them and disliked to move with the Imām (as) and his group. And Zuhayr was the same. Whenever the caravan of the Imām (as) moved, we would remain behind so that we should not be together; then we would continue our way; and wherever the Imām (as) stopped, we would move and continue. This trend continued until we reached a stopover when the Imām (as) together with his companions camped on one side, and we too had no option but to camp on the other side. While we were seated eating our meals, a messenger from the Imām's camp came to us, and after expressing

his salutations addressing Zuhayr, said: ‘Imām (as) is calling you.’ Witnessing this we were so overtaken that we dropped the morsels of food from our hands and were left in amazement. The wife of Zuhayr, who also was with him, said to him: Subhānallāh! The son of the Messenger of Allāh is calling you and you are thinking whether to go or not?!! Rise and go and see what he has to say. Zuhayr stood up and in the state of astonishment went to the presence of the Imām (as) and entered the personal tent of the Imām (as). It did not take long before we saw Zuhayr coming out of the Imām’s tent, while his face was radiant and he was in the state of complete happiness and joy. When he reached us, he said: Remove my tent and place it near the tent of the Imām (as). And he said to his wife’I have resolved to be in the company of the Imām (as) and sacrifice my soul for him. Then he left her in the company of one of his (relatives so that he may take her to her family.(١

Ethicians believe that the sudden transformation in Zuhayr needed the special .attention of Imām Husayn (as), who was also an intermediary of grace

Dear readers this light of wakefulness can take a person so high that he can rank among those who had the privilege of being a noble companion of Imām Husayn(as). If we carefully read the Ziyārah

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Maqālāt- Tarīqe ‘Amaliyyeye Tazkiye (١), pg. ٣٧ -١

:of the martyrs of Karbalā’ we come to realize how exalted was Zuhayr and his likes

أَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَوْلِيَآءَ اللّٰهِ وَ أَحِبَّاءَهُ...

”...Peace be on you O friends of Allāh and His lovers“

أَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ.

”.Peace be on you O helpers of the religion of Allāh“

أَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ رَسُولِ اللّٰهِ.

”.Peace be on you O helpers of the Messenger of Allāh“

أَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ أَمِيْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ.

”.Peace be on you O helpers of the Commander of the faithful“

أَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ فَاطِمَةَ سَيِّدَةِ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ.

”.Peace be on you O helpers of Fātimah, the Mistress of the Women of the Universe“

أَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ أَبِى مُحَمَّدٍ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ الزَّكِيِّ النَّاصِحِ.

(Peace be on you O helpers of Abī Muhammad al-Hasan bin ‘Alī...”(١“

And is it possible for one to be a helper of someone whom he has not met or seen? Why do we say that these companions were the helpers of the Holy Prophet (s), Imām ‘Alī (as), Hadrat Fātima (as) and Imām al-Hasan (as) while they accompanied and supported Imām Husayn (as)? This is because they are the helpers of religion (ansāra dīnillāh). Therefore they help all those who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of dīn. Hence they live before their time. They live with Ādam (as), they live with Nūh (as), they live with Ibrāhīm (as); they live with Mūsā (as), they live with ‘Īsā (as), they live with all the Prophets of Allāh (swt). This is because they sacrificed their lives to revive the teachings of

Mafātīh al-Jinān, Arabic ed., pg. ٥٠٣ -١

religion and woke the slumbering folk. Such people live in the past, present, and future. They are beyond time and place. Small wonder it is that we are taught to :address them saying

فَيالَيْتَنِى كُنْتُ مَعَكُمْ فَأَفُوْزَ مَعَكُمْ .

(I wish I would have been in your company so that I may have succeeded with you."(١)"

After one has woken up from his deep slumber and attained the light of yaqzah, there are particular effects that he would experience. Such effects are outlined and expounded in books of practical gnosis. Observing brevity here we would not like to cover their details. Instead, let us briefly look at the second fundamental stage of self-:reform

.(The second stage of self-reform is al-tawbah (return to Allāh

The Reality of Tawbah

Tawbah (which literally means "to return") is a state of the return of God's servant to his Lord. Wakefulness makes one realize the extent of injustice one had done to himself all his life. This reality does not give him any rest, and he struggles to clear himself of sin. It is not as simple as it seems, but the wakeful wayfarer, is always .resolute in cleansing himself of the dirt by which he blemished his heart all his life

Ethicians believe that before the servant returns to his Lord, Almighty Allāh returns to His servant with His Mercy. It is small wonder that one of the beautiful names of Almighty Allāh is al-Tawwāb [The One Who often turns in Mercy]. This reality is :manifested in the following verse of the Qur'ān

وَعَلَى الثَّلاَثَهِ

١- Ibid.

الَّذِينَ خُلِّفُوا حَتَّى إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَنْ لاَ مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللّهِ إِلاَّ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ .

And to the three who were left behind, until, when the earth became strait for them,“ for all its breadth, and their souls became strait for them, and they thought that there was no shelter from God except in Him, then He turned towards them [Mercifully] [tāba 'alayhim], that they may turn [liyatūbū]; surely Only Allāh is Oft-returning [with (mercy] [al-Tawwāb] and is All-Compassionate.”(١)

This verse refers to three Muslims who refused to participate in the battle of Tabūk due to their laziness. Then after the battle, when the Holy Prophet (s) and the Muslims returned to Madīnah, the three went to the Prophet (s) and expressed their apology, but the Prophet (s) did not speak to them, and the Muslims likewise, following the Prophet (s), did not speak to them, and left them alone. The children too stayed away from them and their own wives were not responsive to them. In this way, they were left so much alone, that the town of Madīnah was a constriction for them, and they left for the mountains and open grounds. The situation had become such that both time and place was a source of constriction for them. And finally they knew that besides Allāh, there was no point of hope. This is when Almighty Allāh turned to them in Mercy, as a result

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١- Holy Qur'ān, ٩:١١٨

of which they started repenting and doing tawbah. Then Almighty Allāh again .returned to them in His Mercy by forgiving them

The aforementioned verse therefore informs us that the first tawba (return in mercy)(۱) is from Allāh. This then enables the servant to turn to Him and repent. Then he needs another tawba (return) from Almighty Allāh so that his sins are forgiven. Therefore the tawbah of the servant is sandwiched by two returns of Almighty Allāh. The verse also indicates that Allāh's return to his servants was continuous, until they repented and returned to their Lord. The letter "waw" at the beginning of the verse "wa 'alā al-thalāthah" is a conjunction, which indicates a continuation of the previous verse which talks about the return of Allāh in Mercy to His Prophet (s), the Emigrants and the Ansār. Thus, apart from Allāh returning in Mercy to the Holy Prophet (s), the emigrants, and the helpers, He also returned in Mercy to the three men (wa 'alā al-thalāthah "...and the three men") who did not participate in the battle of Tabūk. Then Allāh (swt) once again turns to the three men in Mercy: "thumma tābā" (thereafter He turned in Mercy). Therefore there is a clear mention of two consecutive tawbas (returns) before the phrase "liyatūbū" (so that they may repent and turn to Allāh): one through the conjunction and the other by the phrase "thumma tāba". This subtle .aspect needs a little attention to understand

,If tawbah is taken in its universal sense

p: ۱۱۷

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۱ - The readers should note that tawbah is a relative matter, for with regard to Almighty Allāh it means "to Return in Forgiveness and Mercy" whereas with regard to ."His servants it means "to return in repentance

it is the second and the last station before Meeting Almighty Allāh. This is because the process of traversing the different stages of practical gnosis is in fact covering the degrees of returning to God. Every return from Almighty Allāh makes the wayfarer return, until he attains the proximity of Almighty Allāh. The following verse is worthy of :contemplation

وَتُوبُوا إِلـَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ .

(And turn to Allāh all of you, O believers, so that you may attain salvation."(١)..."

Ponder over the phrase, 'tūbū ilallāh [return to Allāh].' Firstly, all believers are enjoined to return to Allāh. This means that tawbah (in all its various levels) is the path to Almighty Allāh. Secondly, since Almighty Allāh is the end of the journey, the journey is necessarily endless, for one can never reach the Absolute and Infinite Perfection which is Allāh. In other words, however far one travels on this journey, he still only possesses finite perefection. Consequently, the imperative verb tūbū [return] also includes the great saints who already enjoy the last stage of wayfaring - but still need wayfaring, for the journey never ends. Experts say that after a certain limit of perfection has been attained the journey is no more vertical, but horizontal. In the words of the people of gnosis - after sayr ilā Allāh (journey to Allāh) ends, sayr fī Allāh begins and never ends. Because the journey is towards Infinite Perfection. In simple terms the journey from the finite to the Infinite is

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Holy Qur'ān, ٢۴:٣١ -١

.infinite. Fa tūbū ilallāh!!! Therefore return to Allāh, O believers

Although tawbah in its initial stages signifies returning from denial and sin to approval and obedience and from heedlessness and forgetfulness to remembrance and seeking God, later there would be nothing like sin or heedlessness. Rather the return would be from'other than God 'to' God 'and from' shirk in its very minute level 'to'tawhid in its highest levels', and from the 'self' to the 'Only beloved.' Ustād (Muhammad Shujā'ī in his monumental ethical masterpiece alludes to this reality.(١)

Conditions of Tawbah

Have we ever thought about the conditions of true tawbah? Many of us may conjecture that perhaps the factors of 'regret' and expression of 'sorrow' to God can suffice for tawbah. The reality of the matter, however, is quite different. Tawbah is not just a transient emotional experience but 'a transformation of one's state.' It is the process of clearing one's heart and soaring to the higher planes of existence. It :begins as follows

وَقَالَ (ع) لِقَائِلٍ قَالَ بِحَضْرَتِهِ (أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ): ثَكِلَتْكَ أُمُّكَ أَتَدْرِى مَا الاِسْتِغْفَارُ؟ أَلاِسْتِغْفَارُ دَرَجَهُ الْعِلِّيِّينَ، وَهُوَ اسْمٌ وَاقِعٌ عَلَى سِتَّهِ مَعَانٍ: أَوَّلُهَا النَّدَمُ عَلَى مَا مَضَى. وَالثَّانِى الْعَزْمُ عَلَى تَرْكِ الْعَوْدِ إِلَيْهِ أَبَداً. وَالثَّالِثُ أَنْ تُؤَدِّىَ إِلَى الْمَخْلُوقِينَ حُقُوقَهُمْ حَتَّى تَلْقَى اللَّهَ أَمْلَسَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ تبعَهٌ. وَالرَّابِعُ أَنْ تَعْمِدَ إِلَى كُلِّ فَرِيضَهٍ عَلَيْكَ ضَيَّعْتَهَا فَتُؤَدِّىَ حَقَّهَا. وَالْخَامِسُ أَنْ تَعْمِدَ إِلَى اللَّحْمِ الَّذِى نَبَتَ عَلَى السُّحْتِ فَتُذِيبَهُ بِالأَحْزَانِ حَتَّى تُلْصِقَ الْجِلْدَ بالْعَظْمِ وَيَنْشَأَ بَيْنَهُمَا لَحْمٌ جَدِيدٌ. وَالسَّادِسُ أَنْ تُذِيقَ الْجِسْمَ أَلَمَ الطَّاعَهِ كَمَا أَذَقْتَهُ حَلاوَهَ الْمَعْصِيَهِ. فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ تَقُولُ: (أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ).

Once in"

Maqālāt Tarīqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiye (١), pp. ٨۶-٨٧ -١

the presence of Imām ‘Alī (as) a person said: Astaghfirullāh (I seek forgiveness from Allāh). Hearing this, the Imām (as) said to him: Thakalatka ummuka; atadrī ma’l istighfār (May your mother weep after you; do you know what is ‘seeking forgiveness’?) Then he continued as follows: Istighfār is a station of the exalted ones :(‘illiyyīn); and it is a name, which stands for six things

[First is to regret for what one has done [of sin .١

[Second, to resolve never to return to what one has done [of sin .٢

To return to the creatures their rights so that you meet Allāh while you have nothing .٣ .on your shoulders

To intend to perform every compulsory act that you had wasted and paying its due .۴ right

To melt the flesh that has been grown out of unlawful means with sorrows [and .۵ hardships] until the skin touches the bone and new flesh grows [out of lawful .sustenance] between them

To make the body taste the pain of obedience the way you made it taste the .۶ sweetness of sin

(That is when you say: Astaghfirullāh (I seek Allāh’s forgiveness.)”(١

Therefore, in order for one to successfully achieve this level of tawbah, which would purify the heart and make it ready for the higher stations of spiritual wayfaring, one .must struggle to meet the abovementioned conditions

Entirely His Grace

It should be noted however that when one is in the state of tawbah, no kind of self esteem should ever deceive him. He should never think that it is his tawbah

Nahju'l Balāgha, pg. ۵۴۹ -۱

that would transport him to the house of the Only Beloved. Rather it is entirely Allāh's Grace and Mercy that enables him to undertake this great journey. Indeed tawbah is necessary, and in fact a succor (tawfīq) of Almighty Allāh Himself, but that should never deceive the repentant. He should always hopeful of its acceptance and understand the fact that it is not his struggle that would reap any benefit, but Allāh's Grace and Mercy. This is a monotheistic vision of the reality. Imām al-Sajjād (as) teaches us the same in supplication no. ۱۶ of his radiant work al-Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah :as follows

لَوْ بَكَيْتُ إِلَيْكَ حتّى تَسْقُطَ أَشْفارَ عَيْنَيَّ، وَانْتَحَبْتُ حتّى يَنْقَطِعُ صَوْتِي، وَقُمْتُ لَكَ حَتَّى تَتَنَشَّرَ قَدَمایَ، وَرَكَعْتُ لَكَ حتّى يَنْخَلِعَ صُلْبِي، وَسَجَدْتُ لَكَ حتّى تَتَفَقَّأَ حِدَقَتایَ، وَأَكَلْتُ تُرَابَ الأَرْضِ طُولَ عُمْرِي، وَشَرِبْتُ مَاءَ الرَّمَادِ آخِرَ دَهْرِي، وَذَكَرْتُكَ فِي خِلالِ ذُلِكَ حتّى يَكِلَّ لِسَانِي، ثُمَّ لَمْ ارْفَعْ طَرْفِي إِلى آفاقِ السَّماءِ اسْتِحْياءً مِنْكَ، مَا اسْتَوْجَبْتُ بِذُلِكَ مَحْوَ سَيِّئَةٍ واحِدَةٍ مِنْ سَيِّئاتِي . وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَغْفِرُ لِي حِينَ اسْتَوْجِبُ مَغْفِرَتَكَ، وَتَعْفُو عَنِّي حِيْنَ اسْتَحِقُّ عَفْوَكَ، فَإِنَّ ذُلِكَ غَيْرُ وَاجِبٍ لِيْ بِاسْتِحْقاقٍ، وَلا اَنَا اهْلٌ لَهُ بِاسْتيجابٍ، إِذْ كانَ جَزائِي مِنْكَ فِي اَوَّلِ مَا عَصَيْتُكَ النَّارَ، فَإِنْ تُعَذِّبْنِيْ فَاَنْتَ غَيْرُ ظَالِمٍ لِي ...

,My God

,were I to weep to You until my eyelids drop off

,wail until my voice wears out

,stand before You until my feet swell up

,bow to You until my backbone is thrown out of joint

,prostrate to You until my eyeballs fall out

,eat the dirt of the earth for my whole life

drink the water

,of ashes till the end of my days

,mention You through all of that until my tongue fails

,and not lift my glance to the sky’s horizons in shame before You

yet would I not merit through all of that

!the erasing of a single one of my evil deeds

Though You forgive me when I merit Your forgiveness

,and pardonest me when I deserve Your pardon

,yet I have no title to that through what I deserve

,nor am I worthy of it through merit

since my repayment from You

from the first that I disobeyed You

!is the Fire

,So if You punishe me

(You do me no wrong.(١

Due to the brevity of this commentary we would suffice with these fundamental stations of the path towards Almighty Allāh over here. Those interested in understanding the intricacies of each and every station of wayfaring may refer to texts such as the Manāzil al-Sā’irīn of Khwājah ‘Abdullāh Ansārī and other relevant .texts of practical gnosis

Having known the basics of self-reform, which is the beginning of every kind of reform, let us now look at how one can effect reform in others. It is incumbent, .however, for us to first understand the characteristics of a true reformer

Characteristics of a True Reformer

:The Holy Qur’ān, chapter ۷, verse no. ۱۷۰, says

وَالَّذِينَ يُمَسِّكُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلاَةَ إِنَّا لاَ نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ .

And those who [۱] hold fast by the book and [۲] keep up prayer; verily We waste not“ ”.the recompense of the reformers

:The above verse informs us that a reformer must

Hold steadfast onto the book (۱

,The great Shī‘ah exegete

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۱ - al-Sahīfah al-Sajjādiyyah (The Psalms of Islām, English Translation by William .Chittick), Supplication no. ۱۶, pp. ۵۹-۶۰

:Shaykh Tabrasī in his Majma‘ al-Bayān says

أَمْسَكَ وَمسَّكَ وَتَمَسَّكَ واسْتَمْسَكَ بِالشَّيْءِ بِمَعْنىً وَاحِدٍ: أَيْ اِعْتَصَمَ بِهِ.

The verbs amsaka and tamassaka and istamsaka bi al-shay’ all have the same“ (meaning, which is ‘to adhere to something.’”(١

And in his al-Mufradāt, an authoritative dictionary of Qur’ānic words, Rāghib al-:Isfahānī says

إِمْسَاكُ الشَّيْءِ: التَّعَلُّقُ بِهِ وَحِفْظُهُ.

(Imsāk al-shay’ (to adhere to something) means to cling to it and protect it.’”(٢“

Therefore, to adhere to the Book in this verse would mean: To hold fast to it and .protect it

Obviously, such adherence and protection should not be imagined to mean safeguarding the physical Qur’ān from being torn, mishandled or misplaced [all of which are also important]. Holding fast to the Qur’ān and protecting it means to follow its teachings and revive them in the different dimensions of human life. The Holy Qur’ān is a book of instructions for both individual as well as social reform. It teaches us how to refine our spirits and beautify it with the Attributes of Almighty Allāh; it outlines the skills and conditions necessary to revive a society; one, therefore, who holds fast to it and protects its teachings would obviously qualify to be a reformer. And protection of its teachings substantially concerns the practical plane. It is not a matter of being learned and able to expound the sublime teachings of the Qur’ān. It is a .matter of action and qualification

:Establish Prayer (٢

:Allāmah Tabātabā’ī in his monumental al-Mīzān says‘

وَتَخْصِيْصُ إِقَامَهِ الصَّلاَهِ بِالذِّكْرِ مِنْ بَيْنِ سَائِرِ أَجْزَاءِ الدِّيْنِ لِشَرَفِهَا وَكَوْنِهَا رُكْنًا مِنْ الدِّيْنِ

1- Tafsīr Majma‘ al-Bayān, v. ۴, pg. ۷۶۲

2- Al-Mufradāt, pg. ۷۶۸

يُحفَظُ بِهَا ذِكْرُ اللّهِ وَالْخُضُوْعُ إِلـى مَقَامِهِ الَّذِى هُوَ بِمَنْزِلَهِ الرُّوْحِ الْحَيَّهِ فِىْ هَيْكَلِ الشَّرَائِعِ الدِّيْنِيَّهِ.

And the particular mention of establishing prayer from among the parts of relgion is“ due to its sacred position and that it is the pillar of religion, which protects and ensures the remembrance of Allāh, and humility to His exalted station, the latter being the (living spirit in the body of religious creeds.”(١)

One who establishes prayer is different from one who only prays. The expression that the Holy Qur'ān employs in this verse as well as other verses is not ‘yusallūna’ (those who pray) but ‘aqāmussalāta’ (those who establish prayer), which calls for responsibility. One who establishes prayer, observes all the perfect etiquette of prayer and ensures that others pray as well. Such a person is not satisfied in observing prayer alone; his selfless spirit would like to see others benefiting from this means of ascension to God. In order to be able to reform an individual or community, one should have the ability to establish prayer. The fundamental significance of :prayer can well be appreciated by looking at the following traditions

:Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said .١

وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ كُلَّ شَیْ ءٍ مِنْ عَمَلِکَ تَبَعٌ لِصَلاتِکَ .

(And know that every thing that you do is according to your prayer.”(٢“

:Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) is reported to have said .٢

إِنْ قُبِلَتْ قُبِلَ مَا سِوَاهَا.

(If it [i.e. Salāt] is accepted the other actions would be accepted.”(٣“

:Imām al-Ridā (as) is reported to have said .٣

...وَأَوَّلُ مَا يُحَاسَبُ الْعَبْدُ عَلَيْهِ

Tafsīr al-Mīzān, v. ٨, pg. ٢٩٩ -١

۲- Wasā’il al-Shī‘a, v. ۴, pg. ۱۶۱

۳- Tahdhīb al-Ahkām, v. ۲, pg. ۲۳۹

الصَّلاَةُ، فَإِنْ صَحَّتْ لَهُ الصَّلاَةُ صَحَّتْ لَهُ مَا سِوَاهَا، وَإِنْ رُدَّتْ رُدَّتْ مَا سِوَاَها...

The first thing that a servant would be accounted for is prayers; if his prayers are in...“ order, then all else would be correct, and if it is rejected then all else would be (rejected...”(١)

Understanding this link between the spirit of prayer and the spirit of action calls for one to revive his prayer so that his acts would carry meaning and value. The reason why many people end in committing al-shirk al-khafī (hidden polytheism) is their ignorance of what they recite in prayer. One who infuses the spirit of utter .monotheism in his prayer, his acts would bear the color of monotheism

Social Reform

Reforming a society and conferring to it its equilibrium is to revive the teachings of Islam and the Qur'ān in the society. The phrase 'Surely we do not waste the recompense of the reformers' of the aforementioned verse (٧:١٧٠) clearly alludes to the fact that "reviving the teachings of the Qur'ān" (yumassikūna bi'l kitābi) is the reality of effecting equilibrium (islāh).' In order for a society to enjoy its state of equilibrium, it must be governed by laws that ensure its stability and purpose. And the only person who can formulate such laws is Almighty Allāh who knows every subtle :aspect of the human being and his salvation. The Holy Qur'ān says

.أَلاَ يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

(Would He who has created not know? And He is the All-Attentive, the All-Aware."(٢"

And when one

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ٨٠, pg. ٢٠ -١
Holy Qur'ān, ٦٧:١۴ -٢

is successful in reforming society, the individuals that form the society would easily be .able to attain perfection

:In his al-Mīzān, the late ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī says

...لَكِنّ سَعَادَةَ الشّخْصِ مَبْنِيَّةٌ عَلى صَلَاحِ الظَّرْفِ الاِجْتِمَاعِى الَّذِى يَعِيْشُ هُوَ فِيْهِ، وَمَا أَصْعَبُ أَنْ يَفْلَحَ فَرْدٌ فِىْ مُجْتَمَعٍ فَاسِدٍ أَحَاطَ بِهِ الشّقَاءُ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ. وَلِذٰلِكَ إِهْتَمَّ فِى إِصْلَاحِ الْمُجْتَمَعِ اِهْتِمَامًا لاَ يُعَادِلُهُ فِيْهِ غَيْرُهُ وَبَذَلَ الْجُهْدَ الْبَالِغَ فِىْ جَعْلِ الدَّسَاتِيْرِ وَالتَّعَالِيْمِ الدِّيْنِيَّةِ حَتّى العِبَادَات مِنَ الصَّلاَةِ وَالْحَجِّ وَالصَّوْمِ اِجْتِمَاعِيَّةً مَا أَمْكَنَ فِيْهَا ذَلِكَ، كُلُّ ذَلِكَ لِيَسْتَصْلِحَ الإِنْسَانُ فِى نَفْسِهِ وَمِنْ جِهَةِ ظَرْفِ حَيَاتِهِ.

But the prosperity of a person depends on the equilibrium of the social conditions...“ where he lives, and how difficult it is for a person to achieve salvation in a corrupt !society, which is embraced with wretchedness from all sides

And that is why it (the Qur’ān) gave unparalleled importance to effecting equilibrium in the society and strived to enact religious commandments and laws to be of a social nature, including devotions, such as the canonical prayer, hajj and fasting. All this was done so that the human being may attain equilibrium of himself and the vessel of his (life...”(١

One of the very important conditions of social reform is the support of the people that form the social unit. Although one may have the qualities of a true reformer, if he is not supported by the people, the state of social equilibrium cannot be attained. There :is a subtle allusion to this truth in the following verse

لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ... .

so that...“

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al-Mīzān fī Tafsīri’l Qur’ān, v. ١٢, pg. ٣٣٠ -١

(the people rise with justice."(١)

Almighty Allāh informs us here that the 'nās' have a determining role to play. He does not tell us that the Prophets (as), would effect justice and equilibrium to the society, but says 'so that the people (nās) rise in justice.' This alludes to collective participation. And this truth is evident for every sound intellect. If the components of the society were to be adamant in their rejection, the reformer would not be able to effect equilibrium. A majority of the masses need to undergo transformation, so that the society returns to the state of its equilibrium. The Holy Qur'ān narrates the destructive end of many of the past nations, who simply refused to change themselves. Due to their obstinacy, they had to face a despicable doom. Look at the :following verses

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ .

Indeed We destroyed generations before you when they did wrong: their" Messengers came to them with Clear Signs, and they were not those who would (believe. Thus do We requite those who sin!"(٢)

It should be noted here that those referred to in the above verse were so degenerate that they could not be changed. They are defined as "wa mā kānu liyu 'minu" (they .were not those to believe). This state obviously was a result of their own misdeeds

Political Stability: A Fundamental Unit of Social Reform

Reforming a society has always been a challenging task, but perhaps it has become even more challenging in the

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Holy Qur'ān, ٥٧:٢٥ -١

Holy Qur'ān, ١٠:١٣ -٢

contemporary era. The prerequisite of social reform is political reform. So long as there is no valid political power, the other dimensions of the society would always be in the state of disequilibrium. Islam, which is a complete religion, and therefore caters for every need of the human being in different dimensions of his life, has not left mankind without a direction for political power and authority. The Holy Qur'ān and the traditions as well as Islamic history vividly illustrate the unity of religion and politics. Islam would like to ensure that the laws of Allāh prevail and that the government makes its decisions entirely on the principles laid by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. This is when every kind of imbalance in the society can be obliterated. Under a firm Islamic government, all the economic problems that stem from different kinds of mischief would be terminated. Under a strict government, promiscuity and other evils would lessen. The atmosphere of such a society would then enable the people to wake up .from their slumber and attain Allāh's proximity

One of the most rational and sublime concepts of political thought in Islam is the concept of wilāyat al-faqīh (the governance of the Islamic jurisprudent). Its rational definition is that in the absence of the ١٢th holy Imām (as), the jurisprudent identified as pious and knowledgeable in Islamic laws can govern a collectivity and lead it towards its material as well as spiritual prosperity. Such a person who enjoys sublime traits, is far

from selfish interests, and is also well-aware of Islamic Law as well as the circumstances of his time, can ably control the government and lead the nation toward prosperity. To consider such a clear fact as dependant on what different clerics believe, and refrain from thinking about or involving oneself in the future of a .collectivity of human beings who need to attain eternal salvation, is unreasonable

The Timeless Reformer of Karbala

Sometimes a historical incident can conquer its spatial limitations and serve as an example for all times, places and people. Immortality is one issue and transcending time and space is another. Immortality deals with the future, but the conquerer of spatial limitations embrace and cover the past as well. The event of Karbalā', which is known to evoke the emotions of the coldest reader, was not only a tragedy as it is so labeled usually, but a reform movement (harakah islāhiyyah) that could serve as a lesson both before and after it transpired. As it has been a source of inspiration for the followers of the Imām (as) after Imām Husayn (as), it has also been a source of inspiration for the preceding prophets of God too. Narrations indicate how the previous Prophets would curse the perpetrators of the heinous massacre [and thus take a stance]. If we understand Imām Husayn's motive, we would fully realize the movement's sublimity. In one of his addresses to Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, he :says

إِنَّـمَا خَرَجْتُ لِطَلَبِ الإِصْلَاحِ فِی أُمَّةِ جَدِّی (ص)، أُرِیدُ أَنْ آمُرَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَأَنْهَی عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ،

وَأَسِيرَ بِسِيرَهِ جَدِّی وَأَبِی عَلِیِّ بْنِ أَبِی طَالِبِ (ع).

I have only risen to seek reform and equilibrium in the nation of my grandfather, the“ Messenger of Allāh; I would like to invite to good and dissuade evil; and adopt the (path of my grandfather and my father, Alī bin Abī Tālib.”(۱)

It looks like as if Imām Husayn (as) informs us of his motive, the method of achieving :it, and those who also employed the method

(Motive: Seeking reform and equilibrium in the nation (ummah

Method: Amr bil Ma’rūf and Nahy ‘ani ‘l Munkar; Adopting the path of his grandfather .and father

Therefore, he aspired to restore equilibrium to the society. He desired that the society enjoy both material as well as spiritual prosperity. The physical amenities bestowed to man are means for his upliftment, and hence should also be given importance. .Nevertheless, the main motive should not be neglected and remain forgotten

The timeless reformer with his utter steadfastness calls out to all epochs: ‘Do not allow the destruction of human values in any social organization! Do not sit quiet while oppressors control the affairs of the people! Struggle to eradicate all kinds of disequilibrium in the Muslim society! The prayer under discussion is a verbal expression. Husayn’s was a practical expression. He, like his noble grandfather, practically manifested his concern of eradicating all kinds of social as well as individual vices. His eagerness in restoring Islamic values was to see the eternal prosperity of ’.humanity

Awaiting for the Noble Government

:In the famous Du‘ā al-Iftitāh, we pray

أَللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَرْغَبُ

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۴۴, pg. ۳۶۸ -۱

إِلَيْکَ فِی دَوْلَهٍ کَرِی_مَهٍ تُعِزُّ بِهَا الإِسْ_لاَمَ وَأَهْلَهُ، وَتُذِلُّ بِهَا النِّفَاقَ وَأَهْلَهُ، وَتَجْعَلُنَا فِیهَا مِنَ الدُّعَاهِ إِلَی طَاعَتِکَ، وَالْقَادَهِ إِلَی سَبِیلِکَ، وَتَرْزُقُنَا بِهَا کَرَامَهَ الدُّنْیَا وَالآخِرَهِ...

O Allāh, indeed we ask you for a noble government in which you would elevate Islam“ and its followers, and degrade hypocrisy and its adherents, and make us among those who invite to your obedience, and leaders on your path, and to grant us by it, nobility ”...in this world and the Hereafter

Our hadīth literature clearly mentions many signs preceding the reappearance of our ۱۲th Holy Imām (as). Many of us observe that a number of these signs already exist. Some of us have the tendency to say that ‘the world is so corrupt today; it is high time that ۱۲th Imām should reappear.’ Such rhetoric may be found in different circles. But objectively speaking, it reveals the narrow-mindedness of those who speak about it. This does not mean that the signs prevalent would not precede his reappearance. However, one should try to observe whether the factors that would prepare the ground for the Imām’s reappearance exist or not. The ۱۲th Holy Imām (as) does not need corruption to reappear. He rather needs the support of the masses who overtly yearn for his reappearance so that equilibrium is created in the society. So long as the masses yearn for his reappearance without being ready for it, it would be futile for him to appear. We must remember that the ۱۲th Imām’s mission is to create

a global Islamic government. For such a government to take form, he needs our support [liyaqūma al-nāsu bi al-qist (so that the people stand in justice)]. And support, we must understand, can be to forgo so many of our worldly interests. It may seem to .be a simple issue, but the reality of the matter is quite different

The concept of awaiting for the ١٢th Imām should be understood in its correct meaning. The secret to its understanding is to ask ourselves about the purpose behind our intizār. Why are we waiting for his reappearance? To create social stability and prosperity? To eradicate corruption and oppression? If that is so, does our prayer conform with our practical lives? Do our actions reveal that we are practically working to create order and eradicate oppression in any circle that is in our limited sphere and power? Have we started with our family and neighborhood and observed whether we truly aspire for that great person who would effect reform globally? We should always try to measure ourselves against the purpose of intizār, and ask: 'Do our actions tally '?with the spirit of effecting reform

Characteristics of the Helpers of our ١٢th Imām (as) in the Reformation Process

In a tradition narrated in Bihār al-Anwār we are informed that the ١٢th Imām (as) would have ٣١٣ sincere companions who would assist him in his reform process. Every one of us who has developed knowledge and love of the Imām (as) and knows his sublime aim as well, would aspire to be one of the ٣١٣ companions mentioned in the

hadīth. But in order for us to qualify for this sacred mission we should identify the characteristics that such reformers would possess. Many who have the strength to revive themselves and adopt a life full of spiritual blessings do have the opportunity to qualify. Mothers too, who can rear their children with excellent morals can shape their future and create the ground for their offspring to qualify for this lofty station. Youth also, who aspire to get married and select such spouses of noble descent and excellent morals that would enable a generation of purity to ensue, can also facilitate personalities who would qualify to be the Imām's loyal supporters. And what exactly are the characteristics of the helpers of the ١٢th holy Imām (as)? The following are traditions that outline the characteristics of the supporters of the ١٢th Holy Imām (as):

١. Possessing an Indepth Knowledge about God:

Imām 'Alī (as) is reported to have said about the soldiers of the ١٢th Holy Imām (as) that:

...رِجالٌ عَرَفُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِهِ، وَهُمْ أَنْصارُ الْمَهْدِی (ع) آخَرِ الزَّمانِ...

"...Men who know Allāh as He should be Known, and they are the helpers of al-Mahdī at the end of time."(١)

Here obviously, the absolute knowledge of God is not meant, for that is beyond the reach of any dependent being, including the Prophet (s) who is reported to have said: mā'arafnāka haqqā ma 'rifatika... we have not known You the way You absolutely deserve. Obviously, no finite being can ever comprehend the Infinite Being.

٢. Possessing the

١- Muntakhab al-Athar, volume ٣, pg. ١٧٧

:Attributes of a Qualified Islamic Leader

Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported(۱) to have said in a lengthy tradition that those who :would come out with Imām al-Mahdi (as) would be as follows

وَلٰكِنَّ هٰذِهِ (الْعِدّه) الَّتِى يُخْرِجُ اللّٰهُ فِيْهَا اَلْقَائِم (ع)، وَهُمْ النُّجَبَاءُ، وَالْقُضَاهُ وَالْحُكَّامُ، وَالْفُقَهَاءُ فِى الدِّيْنِ...

:They are“

- [’Of noble Descent [nujabā
- [Qualified to rule [al-hukkām
- [Qualified to judge [al-qudāt
- ”[Highly learned in religion [al-fuqahā’ fi al-Din

These characteristics therefore create responsibilities for us: if we are of noble descent and marry the nujabā’ (of noble descent), our children too would be of noble descent, if we rear our children and teach them how to be responsible from a young age and enable traits such as bravery, knowledge, etc., to develop, we can create the ground for them to be future leaders, if we inculcate the spirit of seeking religious knowledge in our children, their interest, zeal, etc., would attract them towards gaining indepth knowledge of religion and thus create in them the essential .characteristics of the ۱۲th Imām’s noble supporters

Our Duties

Having understood the steps of reform, each one of us would be able to decide where he or she stands, and what is his or her immediate responsibility. Wherever it is possible for us to effect reform, however limited, we should do so. Otherwise, our .supplication would be mere rhetoric or out of ignorance

O Allāh, Cure Every Sick Person

point

أَللَّهُمَّ اشْفِ كُلَّ مَرِيْضٍ

Meaning

The Arabic word marīd literally means ‘one who is sick or disordered.’ It originates from its infinitive ‘marad’ which means:

الْخُرُوْجُ عَنِ الاِعْتِدَالِ الْخَاصِّ بِالإِنْسَانِ

p: ۱۳۴

۱- Ibid.

وَذٌلِکَ ضَرْبَان : الأوَّلُ مَرَضٌ جِسْمِيٌّ...وَالثَّانِی عِبَارَةٌ عَنِ الرَّذَائِلِ...

to exit from the state of the equilibrium particular to the human being(١); and this is..."of two kinds: (١) bodily sickness... (٢) vices."(٢)

Therefore, in reality, marad is another extension (misdāq) of the state of disequilibrium (fasād), and thus can be discussed under the previous verse of the supplication too.

Extensions of Illnesses

In the Holy Qur'ān and traditions the word "marad" (illness) has been mostly employed to denote one of the abovementioned kinds of human disequilibria. Look at the following:

١. The Holy Qur'ān [٢٦:٨٠] narrating the words of Prophet Ibrāhīm (as), says:

وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ .

"And when I turn ill, He (alone) cures me."

Two points should be noted here:

i) The above verse does not imply that the Prophet (s) would not seek the natural means for the cure. What the verse means is that the Principal Curer (al-Shāfī) is only Allāh. This is because the existence, subsistence, and effect of the agent of cure is entirely by His Will and Permission.

ii) Apparently what is meant in this verse is the physical extension of illness, for Prophets of Allāh (as) are free from spiritual illnesses. They are infallible in their thoughts, words and actions. And that enables them to be propagators and Messengers of God.

٢. The Holy Qur'ān [٢:٨-١٠] describing the hypocrites says:

فِی قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضاً .

".In their hearts is a sickness; and Allāh increased their sickness"

The sickness referred to here is hypocrisy, which concerns the heart and not the body. Therefore

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۱- -Some have also translated the word 'marīd ' as 'disordered ' [See E.W.Lane Arabic-English Lexicon]

۲- Mufradāt Alfāzi'l Qur'ān, pg. ۷۶۵

marad is not limited to physical ailments.

٣. Prophet ‘Īsā (as), is reported to have said:

...مَا مَرِضَ قَلْبٌ بِأَشَدَّ مِنَ الْقَسْوَةِ...

“...The heart did not fall sick with [a malady] more severe than the hardness of the heart...”(١)

٤. Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said:

لاَ مَرَضَ أَضْنـى مِنْ قِلَّهِ الْعَقْلِ.

“There is no malady more debilitating that the paucity of intellect.”(٢)

Here the ‘silliness’ or simplicity of a person is considered to be another kind of sickness. Therefore marad can also employed to denote the dull-wittedness of a person.

٥. And he (as) is also reported to have said:

أَلْحِقْدُ خُلْقٌ دَنِيٌّ وَمَرَضٌ مُرْدٍ.

“Resentment (al-hiqd) is a degenerate characteristic and a destructive illness.”(٣)

Therefore, in short, marad is not limited to physical illness, but covers mental and spiritual illnesses as well.

Supplication for a Sublime Purpose

Health, like any other Divine blessing is meant for a sublime purpose. To underutilize it would be tantamount to unthankfulness on the part of the human being. Our supplications for the betterment of ourselves and others should be purposeful: we must pray for health as a means to affect equilibrium in our souls. Were we to pray for health for the sake of sheer material enjoyment, we would be unthankful to Almighty Allāh, since the practical reality of shukr is to employ the Divine Blessing for the purpose it was created.

:Imām al-Sajjād in his well-known prayer manual al-Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah prays

فَمَـا أَدْرِى يَـا إِلٰهِى أَىُّ الْحَـالَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالشُّكْرِ لَكَ. وَأَىُّ الْوَقْتَيْنِ أَوْلَى بِالْحَمْـدِ لَكَ. أَوَقْتُ الصِّحَّهِ الَّتِى هَنَأْتَنِى فِيهَا طَيِّبَاتِ رِزْقِكَ وَنَشَّطْتَنِى بِـهَا لِابْتِغَاءِ مَرْضَاتِكَ وَفَضْلِكَ وَقَوَّيْتَنِى

p: ۱۳۶

Mustadrak al-Wasā'il, v. ۱۲, pg. ۹۴ -۱

Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim, pg. ۵۵ -۲

.Ibid -۳

مَعَهَا عَلَى مَا وَفَّقْتَنِي لَهُ مِنْ طَاعَتِکَ ...

For I know not, my God, which of the two states deserves more my thanking You,“ And which of the two times is more worthy for my praise of You: the time of health, within which You Make me delight in the agreeable things of Your provision, through which You Give me the joy to seek the means to Your Good Pleasure and Bounty, And by which You Strengthen me for the acts of obedience which You Have Given me (success to accomplish...”(١)

Here the Imām (as) teaches us that health should be sought to achieve Allāh’s pleasure (libtighā’i mardātika) and to perform acts of His obedience (waffaqtanī lahu min tā‘atika). Therefore, when we seek the well-being of every member of the human race, we should do so because we would like the means of their perfection to be facilitated and not because they can regain their health to continue more damage to .themselves or others

The delight of our eyes, Sayyid Radī al-Dīn bin Tāwūs in section ٧ of his Falāh al-Sā’il, :where he enumerates the characteristics of a supplicant, says

مِنْ صِفَاتِ الدَّاعِي: أَنْ يُرِيْدَ بِالدُّعاءِ مُرَادَ اللّٰهِ جَلَّ جَلاَلَهُ بِهِ، وَيُقَدِّمُ إِرَادَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَى إِرَادَةِ نَفْسِهِ. وَمِثَالُهُ: إِذَا مَرِضَ لاَ يَكُوْنُ قَصْدُهُ مِنَ الدُّعَاءِ بِعَافِيَتِهِ مُجَرَّدَ بَقَاءِهِ لِشَهْوَتِهِ وَعَاجِلَتِهِ وَدُنْيَاهُ الشَّاغِلَه عنْ آخِرَتِهِ، بَلْ لِيَبْقَى عَلى مُرَادِ اللّٰهِ جَلَّ جَلاَلَهُ فِيْ طَاعَتِهِ.

And among the characteristics of a supplicant is that he should seek through his“ supplication what Allāh wants of Him and prefer Allāh’s

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١ - al-Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyya, Supg. ١٥, pg. ٥۴, His supplication when Sick or Visited by Distress or an Affliction.

desire over his. For example: when he becomes ill, the purpose behind his supplication for his well-being should not be merely subsistence for the sake of lustful desire, temporal enjoyment and worldly existence that disengages him from his Hereafter, rather it should be for the purpose of living according to what Allāh wants, which is His (Obedience."(١)

!Beyond the Immediate Causes of Illnesses

point

Although it is true to say that we must seek the natural causes of the various maladies to eradicate them, our aspiration should be loftier then to merely search for the :immediate causes. Physicians categorize "illness prevention" into four stages

Primordial prevention .١

:The Holy Qur'ān says

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ... .

Allāh does not change what is with a community save that they change what is in" (them."(٢)

Primordial prevention is to avoid the emergence and establishment of social, .economic and cultural patterns of living which are known to elevate risk of disease

This is certainly the most important of all kinds of prevention. The human being is taught that his lifestyle can indeed determine what kind of future awaits him. To establish those social, economic and cultural patterns that would secure the health of the human being largely depends on the validity of the political body that governs the human society. Only an Islamic government subservient to the principles of Islam, can create a physically healthy environment. This is because the social, economic and cultural patterns would be defined by God, Who Created the human being for prosperity in both this world and

١- Falāh al-Sā’il wa Najāh al-Masā’il, pp. ١٠٢-١٠٣

٢- Holy Qur’ān, ١٣:١١

the Hereafter, and Knows what laws would lead him to this prosperity. There is an interesting anecdote narrated about the situation prevailing in the Muslim community :(during the time of the Holy Prophet (s

During the Holy Prophet (s)'s time, the king of Egypt sent a skilled doctor to the Holy Prophet (s). He lived one year with the Arabs but found no one approaching him for treatment. He therefore came to the Prophet (s) to complain. The Holy Prophet (s) explained to him that the reason behind the situation was that his people had adopted a path of moderation: they did not eat unless their appetite for food overcame them, and (ii) They stopped eating while they still had some appetite for food left. Hearing this, the doctor said: 'This is the cause of [their] health.' Then he kissed the earth, and (left.(۱

:In other words, they obeyed the Holy Prophet (s) and applied his well-known saying

كُلْ وَاَنْتَ تَشْتَهِى وَاَمْسِكْ وَاَنْتَ تَشْتَهِى.

Eat while you have the appetite, and refrain from eating while you still have the" (appetite."(۲

If the laws of Almighty Allāh prevailed in the environment they would deter the human being from engaging in sin, which leads to a substantial number, if not most of the prevalent illnesses. In a society where capitalism and consumerism prevail, what should one expect save the culture of overindulgence? In an environment where the woman is used as an item of advertisement and sale, what can one anticipate save sexual perversion? And these two

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Masā'il-e-Darmānī, v. ۲, pg. ۷۳ -۱

Wasā'il al-Shī'ah, v. ۱۶, pg. ۵۴۰ -۲

major factors contribute to a great number of illnesses. In such a situation primordial prevention is a far fetched phenomenon.

One must understand that the fundamental unit for the realization of primordial prevention, is the government. It is the ideology of the ruling power that determines what kind of society it would like and what kind of lifestyle it encourages.

۲. Primary Prevention

The Holy Qur'ān says:

وَ لَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَهِ

"Do not lay yourself into destruction."(۱)

Primary prevention is action taken prior to the onset of disease, which removes the possibility that a disease will ever occur. For example the preventive measures taken to avoid diseases such as heart attacks, high cholesterol levels, ulcers, etc. is called primary prevention. Often these simple measures are not taken seriously, which leads us to the second stage of prevention i.e. secondary prevention.

In primary prevention, the human being refrains from the causes that would amplify the vulnerability of illness. Abstinence [abstaining from sex beyond marriage], consuming low cholesterol foods, nominal sugar, etc. are known to be kinds of primary prevention. This kind of prevention is also difficult for those suffering from spiritual maladies such as avarice, overindulgence, etc. The following traditions emphasize the important role of denial before sickness:

i) Imām Amīru'l Mu'minīn (as) is reported to have said:

الْمَعِدَهُ بَيْتُ الْأَدْوَاءِ، وَالْحِمْيَهُ رَأْسُ الدَّوَاءِ. لَا صِحَّهَ مَعَ النَّهَمِ.

"The stomach is the house of maladies, and denial is the principal medicine, and there is no well-being in greed."(۲)

ii) And he (as) has also said:

صَلاَحُ الْبَدَنِ الْحِمْيَهُ.

In denial is the equilibrium of“

p: ۱۴۰

Holy Qur’ān, ۲:۱۹۵ -۱

Mustadrak al-Wasā’il, v. ۱۶, pg. ۴۵۲ -۲

(the body."(1)

:iii) Imām Abū Ibrāhīm al-Kazim (as) is reported to have said

لَيسَ الْحِمْيَهُ أَنْ تَدَعَ الشَّیْ ءَ أَصْلاً، وَلٰكِنَّ الْحِمْيَهَ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ مِنَ الشَّیْ ءِ وَتُخَفِّفَ.

Denial does not mean that you avoid a thing totally, and do not eat it; rather, it means" (that you have a light consumption of something."(2)

:iv) And Imām Abu'l Hasan al-Ridā (as) is reported to have said

رَأْسُ الْحِمْيَهِ الرِّفْقُ بِالْبَدَنِ.

(The peak of denial is to treat the body gently and with friendliness."(3)"

To deal with the body in a friendly manner does not mean to eat whatever you want. This wise dictum of Imām al-Ridā (as) calls us to identify those things that the body needs and provide it with the same. Overindulgence in eating would therefore be contrary to what our body requires. Although it would give utter pleasure to the taste buds of our tongues, but its consequences are detrimental to our bodies. Uncontrolled sexual activity is the same. The utmost pleasure can be sought from these acts, but .the consequences are harmful for the body

There is a beautiful poem attributed to Avicenna where he considers the secret of :medicine in the moderation of food consumption and sex

:He says

إسْمَعْ جَمِيْعَ وَصِيَّتِیْ وَاعْمَلْ بِهَا

فَالطِّبُّ مَجْمُوْعٌ بِنَظْمِ كَلاَمِی

اَقْلِلْ جِماعَکَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتَ فَإِنَّهُ

مَاءُ الْحَياهِ تَصُبُّ فِی الأَرْحَامِ

وَاجْعَلْ غَذاءَکَ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ مرّةً

وَاحْذَرْ طَعَاماً قَبْلَ هَضْمِ طَعَامِ

Listen to all what I have to advise, and act accordingly

For medicine is gathered in the poetry of my word

Lessen your copulation as much as you can

For verily it is the water of life that

۱- Ghuraru'l Hikam, pg. ۳۲۰

۲- Wasā'il al-Shī'a, v. ۲۵, pg. ۲۲۹

۳- Fiqh al-Ridā, pg. ۳۴۰

is placed in the wombs

And make your meal once a day

And beware of eating before the digestion of what you have eaten

Secondary Prevention .۳

:Imām Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Sadiq (as) is reported to have said

إنَّ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الأَنْبِيَاء مَرِضَ فَقَالَ: لاَ أَتَدَاوَى حَتىّ يَكُوْنُ الّذِىْ أمْرَضَنِى هُوَ الَّذِى يَشْفِيْنِى. فَأَوْحَى اللُّهُ تَعَالــى إِلَيْهِ: لاَ أشْفِيْكَ حَتىّ تَتَدَاوَى، فَإِنَّ الشّفَاء مِنِّى.

One of the Prophets [once] got ill, whereupon he said: I shall not cure myself until He“ Who made me sick treats me Himself. Thereupon Almighty Allāh revealed unto him: I (will not cure you, until you treat yourself, for surely ‘cure’ comes from Me.”(۱

Secondary prevention is action, which halts the progress of a disease at its incipient stage and prevents complications. Treating diseases with medicines constitutes secondary prevention. The health programs initiated by governments are usually at .the level of secondary prevention

Islam does not encourage one to immediately seek medicine for illnesses that only need time to disappear. As long as the human being can bear the difficulty and pain of a certain sickness like mild flu, he or she is encouraged to do so. To immediately resort to medicine is not a wise course. Instead, one is highly advised to seek the natural foods that have a medicinal effect on the body. Yes, there are illnesses, which should be controlled at their incipient phases. If one is in doubt or detects such an illness, he .should immediately seek medical treatment so that the situation does not get worse

Tertiary Prevention .۴

Tertiary prevention is a preventive

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۵۹, pg. ۶۶ -۱

measure used late in the stage of the disease. It includes limiting disabilities and .carrying out rehabilitation programs

?Can Illness Be Totally Avoided

With scientific advancement, the causes of many illnesses and their remedies have been discovered. But can we limit the causes of the various illnesses to what has been discovered so far? Both the scientist and the philosopher will respond in the negative. This is because there is always a probability of there being other unknown causes of certain maladies. The scientist has no right to limit the causes of a certain malady to what the latest empirical data suggests, since there is always a chance of discovery of other causes to different maladies. The scientist can also not claim that no psychological or spiritual factor is responsible for physical illnesses, for he does not comprehend the link between the body and the soul, and cannot transcend the .senses

Imām al-Sādiq (as) was once asked by an atheist as to why is it deserving for a small child to suffer from ailments and sicknesses while he is sinless and has committed no :crime. The Imām (as) responded saying

إِنَّ الْمَرَضَ عَلَى وُجُوهٍ شَتَّى: مَرَضُ بَلْوَى، وَمَرَضُ الْعُقُوبَهِ، وَمَرَضٌ جُعِلَ عَلَيْهِ الْفَنَاءُ، وَأَنْتَ تَزْعُمُ أَنَّ ذٌلِكَ مِنْ أَغْذِيَهٍ رَدِيئَهٍ وَأَشْرِبَهٍ وَبِيئَهٍ أَوْ مِنْ عِلَّهٍ كَانَتْ بِأُمِّهِ، وَتَزْعُمُ أَنَّ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ السِّيَاسَهَ لِبَدَنِهِ وَأَجْمَلَ النَّظَرَ فِى أَحْوَالِ نَفْسِهِ وَعَرَفَ الضَّارَّ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ مِنَ النَّافِعِ لَمْ يَمْرَضْ، وَتَمِيلُ فِى قَوْلِكَ إِلى مَنْ يَزْعُمُ أَنَّهُ لاَ يَكُونُ الْمَرَضُ وَالْمَوْتُ إِلاَّ مِنَ الْمَطْعَمِ وَالْمَشْرَبِ، قَدْ مَاتَ أَرَسْطَالِيسُ مُعَلِّمُ الأَطِبَّاءِ، وَأَفْلاطُونُ رَئِيسُ

p: ۱۴۳

الْحُكَماءِ، وَجالِينُوسُ شاخَ وَدَقَّ بَصَرُهُ وَمَا دَفَعَ الْمَوْتَ حِينَ نَزَلَ بِساحَتِهِ.

Indeed, illnesses are of various kinds: the illness of Divine tribulation, the illness of“ Divine punishment, and illness as a means for death. You think that the reason behind the illness is the partaking of rotten food and contaminated water, or a malady that was present in the child's mother. You think that whosoever manages his body properly and takes good care of the conditions of his spirit and distinguishes the harmful foods from the advantageous will never fall sick? Your thinking resembles one who imagines that sickness and death do not occur save through food and drink; surely Aristotle, the mentor of physicians and Plato, the chief of the philosophers died; and Galen became old and his eyesight failed, and he could not repel death when it came to him."(١)

Therefore even if one puts great efforts in observing hygiene as well as primary .prevention, he cannot guarantee himself immunity from illness

Illness – a Means of Self-Purification

The apparent form of physical illness may seem to be affliction and trouble, but its kernel manifests nothing but love, mercy and attention. In our traditions, illness for a believer plays the role of a detergent of the human soul that purifies it from the burden of sins so that the soul can qualify to be receptive and perhaps start the .journey to Almighty Allāh

Following are some of the many traditions that clearly show how illnesses can be an :advantage to the believing souls

١. The Holy Prophet (s)

١- al-Ihtijāj, v. ٢, pg. ٢٢۵

is reported to have said:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَكُوْنُ لَهُ الدَّرَجه عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ لاَ يَبْلُغُهَا بعَمَلِهِ يُبْتَلی ببَلاَءٍ فِی جِسْمِهِ فَيَبْلُغُهَا بذٰلِکَ.

“Indeed a person may have a station near God which he could not attain only by his actions, (and thus) he would be afflicted by an ailment in his body by which he would attain the station.”(١)

٢. Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said:

إِذَا ابْتَلی اللّٰهُ عَبْدًا أَسْقَطَ عَنْهُ مِنَ الذُّنُوْبِ بِقَدْرِ عِلَّتِهِ.

“When Allāh afflicts His servant with a calamity, He reduces his sins in accordance with his malady.”(٢)

٣. Imām al-Ridā (as) is reported to have said:

الْمَرَضُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ تَطْهِيْرٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ، وَلِلْكَافِرِ تَعْذِيْبٌ وَلَعْنَةٌ...

“Sickness is purification and mercy for the believer and a punishment and curse for the disbeliever...”(٣)

٤. Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said:

صُدَاعُ لَيْلَهٍ تَحُطُّ كُلَّ خَطِيْئَهٍ إِلاَّ الْكَبائِر.

“A night’s headache removes all of one’s sins, save the major ones.”(۴)

Mediation by those who possess Existential Influence

The human being has an ability to soar to such heights that he can influence the world of contingent existence (takwīn) by the permission of Almighty Allāh. As for the Prophets of Almighty Allāh, this is a fact that one can observe in different places of the Holy Qur’ān. An example is that of Prophet ‘Īsā (as):

Almighty Allāh says:

وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنْ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَهِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِی فَتَنفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِی وَتُبْرِئُ الأَكْمَهَ وَالأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِی وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَی بِإِذْنِی... .

and when you fashioned out of clay a thing like the form of a bird by My permission,…“
then you breathed into it and it became a bird by

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۸۱, pg. ۱۷۴ -۱

Ibid., v. ۸۱, pg. ۱۷۶ -۲

.Ibid -۳

Bihār al-Anwār ,v. ۸۱, pg. ۲۰۰ -۴

My permission, and you healed the blind and the leprous by My permission; and when (you brought forth the dead by My permission...."(١)

In all the abovementioned wonders that Prophet 'Īsā (as) was able to perform, he required Divine permission to lay his influence on contingent existents. That is why the .phrase "by My permission" is iterated after every wonder described

As regards the infallible Imāms of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as), we do have reports of such influence by them and there is enough evidence to indicate that such phenomena are normal and simple for them, since they enjoy al-wilāyah al-takwiniyyah (the powers to lay influence in contingent existence), and they are intermediaries of Divine Grace (wasā'it al-fayd al-ilāhī) as well. Following are some instances worthy of :contemplation

١. Uprooting the door of Khaybar is a phenomenon that is beyond the scope of science to explain. No strong human being can do this with his bodily strength. While explaining to Sahl bin Hunayf how he managed to uproot the heavy door of Khaybar, :Imām (as) said

وَاللّٰهِ مَا قَلَعْتُ بَابَ خَيْبَرٍ وَقَذَفْتُ بِهِ وَرَائِى اَرْبَعِيْنَ ذِرَاعًا لَمْ تَحُسّ أَعْضَائِى بِقُوّةٍ جَسَدِيّةٍ وَحَرَكةٍ غَرِيْزِيّةٍ بَشَرِيّةٍ، وَلٰكِنّى اُيّدْتُ بِقُوّةٍ مَلَكُوْتِيّةٍ وَنَفْسٍ بِنُوْرِ رَبِّهَا مُضِيْئَةٌ.

I swear by Allāh, I did not uproot the door of Khaybar and throw it ٤٠ forearms away" while the members of my body did not feel anything, with bodily strength, or nutritive momentum, but I was supported by celestial power and the spirit which is radiant with (the Light of its Lord."(٢

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١- Holy Qur'ān, ch. Al-Mā'idah (۵), v. ١١٠

٢- Āyatullāh Hasan Zādeh Āmolī, Sarh al-'Uyūn Fī Sharh al-'Uyūn, pg. ٧٣٠

History tells us that once in the gathering of the 'Abbasid Caliph Ma'mūn, Hamīd bin Mahrān, a supporter of the Caliph, belittling Imām al-Ridā (as) tried to challenge him saying that his prayer for rain which was followed by heavy rains after a long drought was something ordinary and that rain came at its normal season. He said that if the Imām (as) could perform miracles which were beyond the powers of ordinary men, then he should order the pictures of the two lions that were painted on the curtains of the court of Ma'mūn to become real lions and jump on him and swallow him up. The Imām (as) pointed to the two pictures and they became real lions, and pounced at Mehrān and ate him up and then turned toward Ma'mun and started gazing at him. Thereafter facing the Imām (as) the lions said to the Imām: what do you order us to do with this one (i.e. Ma'mūn)? On seeing this, Ma'mūn fell unconscious. The Imām (as) said to the lions to return where they came from.(۱)

These were instances that transpired through the Imāmṣ(as). However, is this possible also with other human beings who attain heights of perfection? Do the Awliyā'ullāh (near ones to God) possess such power too? Can they cure a sick person without employing the conventionally known methods?

Let us look at the Holy Qur'ān and find the answer:

قَالَ الَّذِی عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا آتِیکَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ یَرْتَدَّ إِلَیْکَ طَرْفُکَ فَلَمَّا رَآهُ

۱- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۴۹, pg. ۱۸۴

مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هٰذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّی لِیَبْلُوَنِی أَأَشْکُرُ أَمْ أَکْفُرُ وَمَنْ شَکَرَ فَإِنَّمَا یَشْکُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ کَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّـــی غَنِیٌّ کَرِیـمٌ .

Said one who had knowledge of the Book: "I will bring it to you within the twinkling of" any eye!" Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said: "This is by the grace of my Lord! To test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful! And if any one is grateful, truly his gratitude is (a gain) for his own soul; but if any is ungrateful, truly my (Lord is Free of All Needs, Supreme in Honor!"(١)

According to the traditions of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as), the 'one who had knowledge of the book' in the above verse, was the minister of Sulaymān called Āsaf bin Barkhiyyah(٢). He was the person who with Divine consent brought the throne of queen Bilqīs within the twinkling of an eye. He was known to possess knowledge of al-Ism al-A'zam (the .great Name of Allāh), and therefore could perform such powerful feats

We must understand however that according to authoritative Muslim scholars, neither does the al-Ism al-A'zam (Great Name) actually consist of letters and words, nor is the knowledge of the Great Name the conceptual or mental knowledge of a certain word or specific letters as the majority of the laity imagined and believed so far. The knowledge of al-Ism al-A'zam is a maqām and station that the human being attains after self-purification and attaining human perfection. 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī in

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Holy Qur'ān, ٢٧:٣٩ -١

al-Mīzān, v. ۵۵, pg. ٣٧٠ -٢

(volume ۷ of his exegesis, al-Mīzān has explained this fact at length.(۱

Salmān al-Muhammadī and his Powers

One of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s) who enjoyed the station of al-wilāyah al-takwīniyyah was Salman al-Farsi, who was also known as Salman al-Muhammadī by the Ahlu'l Bayt (as). Being utterly subservient to the Ahlu'l Bayt (as), he was also known to be from among them. Once Salmān al-Fārsī's name was mentioned near :Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as), and he said

لا تَقُولُوا سَلْمَانَ الْفَارِسِيَّ، وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا سَلْمَانَ الْمُحَمَّدِيَّ. ذَاکَ رَجُلٌ مِنَّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ.

Do not say Salmān al-Farsī, but say Salmān al-Muhammadī, for he is a man from us," (the Ahlu'l Bayt (as)."(۲

It is important and necessary for us to realize and understand that ma'rifah and gnosis are of various levels. Those who attain the lower levels cannot comprehend the higher levels. Rather, the matter becomes so intricate that if those of lower levels were to hear what the exalted ones have to say, they would have termed them as disbelievers and done things worse than that. Salmān al-Muhammadī enjoyed a very :high rank, such that Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn is reported to have said about him

وَاللّٰهِ لَوْ عَلِمَ أَبُو ذَرّ مَا فِی قَلْبِ سَلْمَان لَقَتَلَهُ.

I swear by Allāh, if Abū Dharr knew what was in the heart of Salmān, he would have" (killed him."(۳

:And Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) is reported to have said

دَخَلَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ عَلَى سَلْمَانَ وَهُوَ يَطْبَخُ قِدْراً لَهُ، فَبَيْنَا هُمَا يَتَحَادَثَانِ إِذَا انْكَبَّتِ الْقِدْرُ عَلَى وَجْهِهَا عَلَى الأَرْضِ، فَلَمْ يَسْقُطْ مِنْ مَرَقِهَا وَلاَ مِنْ وَدَكِهَا شَيْ ءٌ،

Ibid., v. ۷ pp. ۳۵۴-۳۵۵ -۱

Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۲۲, pg. ۳۴۹ -۲

Ibid., v. ٢٢, pg. ٣۴٣ -٣

فَعجِبَ مِنْ ذُلِكَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ عَجباً شَدِيداً، وَأَخذَ سَلْمَانُ الْقِدْرَ فَوَضَعَهَا عَلَى حَالِهَا الأَوَّلِ عَلَى النَّارِ ثَانِيَهً، وَأَقْبَلاَ يَتَحَدَّثَانِ فَبَيْنَمَا هُمَا يَتَحَدَّثَانِ إِذَا انْكَبَّتِ الْقِدْرُ عَلَى وَجْهِهَا فَلَمْ يَسْقُطْ مِنْهَا شَيْ ءٌ مِنْ مَرَقِهَا وَلاَ مِنْ وَدَكِهَا، قَالَ فَخَرَجَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ وَهُوَ مَذْعُورٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ سَلْمَانَ، فَبَيْنَمَا هُوَ مُتَفَكِّرٌ إِذْ لَقِيَ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (ع) عَلَى الْبَابِ، فَلَمَّا أَنْ بَصُرَ بِهِ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (ع) قَالَ لَهُ: يَا بَا ذَرٍّ! مَا الَّذِي أَخْرَجَكَ وَمَا الَّذِي ذَعَرَكَ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَبُو ذَرٍّ: يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ! رَأَيْتُ سَلْمَانَ صَنَعَ كَذَا وَكَذَا، فَعَجِبْتُ مِنْ ذُلِكَ. فَقَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ(ع): يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ! إِنَّ سَلْمَانَ لَوْ حَدَّثَكَ بِمَا يَعْلَمُ لَقُلْتَ رَحِمَ اللَّهُ قَاتِلَ سَلْمَانَ!

Abū Dharr once came to Salmān while he was cooking in a cooking pot; while they“ were conversing with each other, the cooking pot overturned and fell down on the ground, but not a drop of its curry or cooking fat fell down; Abū Dharr was highly amazed at seeing this; Salmān picked up the cooking pot and placed it on the fire the second time, and they began conversing once again; while they were talking to each other, the pot overturned again, and nothing of the curry or cooking fat spilled, Abu Dharr then left Salmān in the state of great astonishment , and while he was deep in thought, he suddenly met Amīr al-Mu'minīn (as) at the door. When the Imām (as) saw Abū Dharr's state of amazement, he said to him: O Abā Dharr, what made you leave the presence of Salmān? And

what made you frightened? Abū Dharr said to the Imām (as): O Amīr al-Mu'minīn, I saw Salmān doing such and such a thing, and I was amazed by that. Thereupon Amīr al-Mu'minīn (as) said to him: O Abā Dharr, If Salmān were to tell you what he knows, (you would have said: May Allāh have mercy on the killer of Salmān."(۱)

:This incident reveals much. It is important to note the following

۱. Īmān (belief) and ma'rifah (knowledge of God) have different levels. Those who enjoy the lower levels cannot bear the knowledge of the high ranking ones like :Salmān al-Muhammadi. Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) is also reported to have said

سَلْمَانُ بَحْرُ الْعِلْمِ لاَ يُقْدَرُ عَلَى نَزْحِه.

"(Salmān is an ocean of knowledge, which cannot be drained and exhausted."(۲)

:Abū Basīr is reported to have said that he heard Imām al-Sādiq (as) saying

إِنَّ سَلْمَانَ عَلِمَ الإِسْمَ الاَعْظَمَ.

"Surely Salmān knew the Greatest Name of God (al-ism al-a'zam)."

And as we said, this name is not a word to be memorized but an exalted spiritual state. Men of gnosis describe it as the state of exemplifying in oneself the beautiful .attributes of Almighty Allāh according to one's limitations

۲. Salmān al-Muhammadī had powers that enabled him to lay influence in existence, and that is why not a drop of curry spilled off even if the vessel overturned. Other incidents are also narrated about him, which we have not considered here, due to the .limited scope of this work

۳. The statement that if Abū Dharr would have known what

p: ۱۵۱

۱- Bahj al-Sabāghah Fī Sharhi Nahj al-Balāghah, v. ۳, pg. ۴۰۲

۲- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۲۲, pg. ۳۴۷

Salmān knew he would have said 'May Allāh have mercy on the killer of Salmān' should not make us imagine that the belief of Salmān and Abū Dharr contradicted each other. Not at all. It is the stages of knowledge, as 'Allāmah Majisī(١) and Mawlā Fayd al-Kāshānī(٢) allude in their works, that differ. A narrow receptacle cannot contain more that its capacity. Can you fill a bucket full of water in a small cup? Otherwise, Abū Dharr was one of the great companions of the Holy Prophet (s) about whom it is narrated from the Holy Prophet (s) that:

مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى زُهْدِ عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ (ع) فَلْيَنْظُرْ إِلَى أَبِى ذَرٍّ.

"Whosoever would like to look at the zuhd (detachment of the world) of 'Isā (as) bin Maryam, should look at Abū Dharr."(٣)

الْجَنَّهُ تَشْتَاقُ إِلَيْکَ يَا عَلِيُّ، وَإِلَى عَمَّارٍ وَسَلْمَانَ وَأَبِى ذَرٍّ وَالْمِقْدَادِ.

"O' 'Alī, verily Paradise yearns for you and for 'Ammār, Salmān, Abū Dharr and Miqdād."(۴)

In short, both the examples of Āsaf bin Barkhiyyah and Salmān al-Muhammadī reveal that other human beings too, are able to attain a station that can enable them to do things that those far away from God cannot do.

Ibn Sīnā in his great work Remarks and Admonitions, says: "You may receive information about the gnostics that almost runs counter to custom, and then you begin to disbelieve. And this is like saying a knower ('ārif) sought rain for people, hence, they received rain; or sought recovery for them, hence, they recovered; or wished them

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١- Ibid., v. ٢٢, pg. ٣۴٣

٢- al-Mahajjat al-Baydā', v. ١, pg. ۶۵

٣- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ٢٢, pg. ٢۴٣

۴- Ibid., v. ٢٢, pg. ٢۴٣

ill, hence they were cast down, inflicted by earth tremors, or perished in another way. This is also like saying he wished them well, hence they were emancipated from diseases, murrain, torrential stream and flood; or a beast submits to some of them, or no birds flees from them, or other similar things occur that do not count as belonging to the kind of things that are clearly impossible. Stand still and do not rush into rejecting these things, for such things have causes in the mysteries of nature. Perhaps it will be possible for me to relate some of these causes to you."(1)

Does Seeking Help from the Ahululbayt (as) for Curing Our Maladies Amount to Shirk?

Human beings have different degrees of power and strength. It is an obvious phenomenon that the less powerful seek assistance from the more powerful. When seeking support and assistance from other human beings, do we commit shirk (polytheism)? Certainly not, for we do not seek assistance from the strong ones and at the same time consider them to possess independent power. We are also not certain whether they would complete the job. Why? This is because they do not have anything of their own. They are contingent and dependent beings. They and their acts all depend and subsist by the All-Powerful Being. This truth is understood by contemplating on the adjective "al-Qayyūm" in the well-known verse of the Throne (Āyat al-Kursī):

أَللَّهُ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْحَىُّ الْقَيُّومُ .

"Allāh; Except Him there is no God; He Alone is All-living and All-Subsisting."(2)

Al-Qayyūm is defined as al-Qā'imu bidhātih wa

۱- Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt (Ibn Sina and Mysticism), tr. by Shams Inati, pg. ۱۰۴

۲- Holy Qur'ān, ۲:۲۵۲

al-Muqawwimu lighayrih, which means “One who is Essentially Subsisting and every other entity and being subsists by Him(١). Therefore no one can ever claim to have any kind of independent perfection whatsoever. Consequently, seeking assistance from anyone other than Him in any limited degree, with the intention that every power solely comes from Him and belongs to Him is nothing but tawhīd.

The Holy Qur’ān says:

وَ اللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ .

“But Allāh created you and what you do.”(٢)

The same applies with regard to the Infallible Imāms (as) of the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s), who have more power than others and have access to the higher realms too. Should we consider seeking their support to be shirk? The answer is clear: shirk is out of question because we do not consider them to have independent power. We certainly know that every effect that they would lay would be entirely with Allāh’s leave. This reality is aptly stated in the verse of the Throne of the Holy Qur’ān:

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِى يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِهِ .

“Who can mediate near Him save by His permission.”(٣)

It should be noted that shafā’ah and mediation here refers to existential mediation.

‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī in his al-Mīzān says:

وقد فاتهم أولاً أن ثبوت التأثير سواء كان مادياً أو غير مادى فى غيره تعالى ضرورى لا سبيل إلى إنكاره، وقد أسند تعالى فى كلامه التأثير بجميع أنواعه إلى غيره، ونفى التأثير عن غيره تعالى مطلقاً يستلزم إبطال قانون العليه والمعلوليه العام الذى هو الركن فى جميع أدله التوحيد،

١- Sharh al-Asmā’, pg. ٣۶٣

٢- Holy Qur’ān, ٣٧:٩۶

٣- Holy Qur’ān, ٢:٢۵۵

وفیه هدم بنیان التوحید. نعم، المنفی من التأثیر عن غیره تعالی هو الاستقلال فی التأثیر ولا کلام لأحد فیه، وأما نفی مطلق التأثیر ففیه إنکار بدیهه العقل والخروج عن الفطره الإنسانیه.

They however did not realize the following: establishing influence, be that material or“ immaterial with regard to other than Allāh is necessary and inarguable. Further, God has attributed in his speech all kinds of influence to other than Him; and the absolute negation of influence from other than Him necessitates the annulment of the [intellectually established] universal law of causality [every effect necessitates a cause] which is a fundamental principle in all the proofs of monotheism; and in that .[i.e. the annulment of..] is the destruction of the foundation of monotheism

Yes, that influence which is unacceptable from other than God is 'Independent Influence' and there is no contradiction in this. However, negating 'influence' in the absolute sense is contradicting the rationally self-evident and transgressing the (bounds of the human disposition (fitrah)..."(١)

Visiting the Sick: A Manifestation of True Concern

One of the manifestations of true concern for the sick is to visit them and seek information about their well-being. To verbally pray for them but be indifferent of their condition seems to be somewhat paradoxical. Of course this is different from a situation in which one does pray for sick people, but has no opportunity to visit them .due to his or her important schedule

Besides psychological research, which proves that visiting the sick confers a lot of solace and sometimes can radically improve the condition of the ailing one

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١- al-Mīzan, v. ١٠, pg. ٢٩۵

as well, our traditions enumerate lots of blessings for visiting sick people. Following :are traditions worthy of contemplation

:i) The Messenger of Allāh is reported to have said

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ (ص) قَالَ: يُعَيِّرُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَبْداً مِنْ عِبَادِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَهِ فَيَقُولُ: عَبْدِی مَا مَنَعَکَ إِذَا مَرِضْتُ أَنْ تَعُودَنِی؟ فَيَقُولُ: سُبْحَانَکَ سُبْحَانَکَ! أَنْتَ رَبُّ الْعِبَادِ، لاَ تَأْلَمُ وَلاَ تَمْرَضُ. فَيَقُولُ: مَرِضَ أَخُوکَ الْمُؤْمِنُ فَلَمْ تَعُدْهُ، وَعِزَّتِی وَجَلاَلِی لَوْ عُدْتَهُ لَوَجَدْتَنِی عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ لَتَكَفَّلْتُ بِحَوَائِجِکَ فَقَضَيْتُهَا لَکَ، وَذٰلِکَ مِنْ کَرَامَهِ عَبْدِیَ الْمُؤْمِنِ، وَأَنَا الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ.

On the Judgment Day Almighty Allāh would reproach a servant among his servants, and say: 'O My servant, what hampered you from visiting Me when I fell sick.' The servant thereupon would say: 'Free from imperfections are You! Free from imperfections are You! You are the Lord of the people, neither do You sense any pain, nor do You fall sick.' Thereupon Allāh would say: 'Your mu'min brother fell sick, and you did not visit him; I swear by my Invincibility and Majesty, were you to visit him, you would have found Me near him, and I would have taken the responsibility of attending to your needs and would give them to you; and this is due to the nobility of My believing servant, and I am the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful.'"(١)

:Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) is reported to have said .٢

كَانَ فِيمَا نَاجَى بِهِ مُوسَى (ع) رَبَّهُ أَنْ قَالَ: يَا رَبِّ مَا بَلَغَ مِنْ عِيَادَهِ الْمَرِيضِ مِنَ الأَجْرِ؟ فَقَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: أُوَكِّلُ بِهِ مَلَكاً يَعُودُهُ فِی قَبْرِهِ إِلَى مَحْشَرِهِ.

Among"

Wasā'il al-Shī'a, v. ٢, pg. ۴١٧ -١

those things that Mūsā (as) whispered to his Lord was : ‘O Lord inform me the extent of reward that a person who visits the sick would get?’ Allāh said: ‘I would entrust an angel over him who would visit him in his grave until his resurrection [on the Judgment Day].’”(١)

٣. Imām Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said:

مَنْ عَادَ مَرِيضاً شَيَّعَهُ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لَهُ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ إِلَى مَنْزِلِهِ.

“Whosoever visits a sick person, ٧٠,٠٠٠ angels escort him while they seek for forgiveness for him, until he returns back to his house.”(٢)

Despite all the above merits, a selfless and concerned human being would visit the sick because his innate disposition (fitrah) calls him to do that, and not due to the attraction of the reward.

Visiting the sick, however, should be brief as has been indicated in various traditions, and one must also try to observe the etiquette of visiting the sick. Due to the brevity of the present work, we will avoid going into details about this. However, those who are interested to know the details can refer to traditional texts such as vol. ٨١ of Bihār al-Anwār of ‘Allāmah Majlisi.

“Āh” is One of the Names of Allāh

Both the Holy Qur’ān as well as the traditions of the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) greatly emphasize that one should not complain in the state of sickness and affliction. And whosoever observes patience is promised great reward. Look at the following traditions:

١. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

أَرْبَعٌ مِنْ كُنُوزِ الْجَنَّهِ: كِتْمَانُ الْفَاقَهِ، وَكِتْمَانُ الصَّدَقَهِ،

١- Bihar al-Anwār, v. ٨١, pg. ٢١٨

٢- Mīzān al-Hikmah, v. ۴, pg. ٢٨٨٨

وَكِتْمَانُ الْمُصِيبَهِ، وَكِتْمَانُ الْوَجَعِ.

Four things are from among the treasures of Paradise: to hide one’s need; to give“ (sadaqah secretly, to hide one’s calamity, and to hide one’s pain.”(١

:Abdullāh bin Mas’ūd is reported to have said‘ .٢

بَيْنَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) إِذْ تَبَسَّمَ، فَقُلْتُ لَهُ: مَا لَكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ تَبَسَّمْتَ؟ فَقَالَ (ص): عَجِبْتُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ وَجَزَعِهِ مِنَ السُّقْمِ، وَلَوْ يَعْلَمُ مَا لَهُ فِي السُّقْمِ مِنَ الثَّوَابِ لأَحَبَّ أَنْ لاَ يَزَالَ سَقِيماً حَتَّى يَلْقَى رَبَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

While we were in the presence of the Holy Prophet (s), when he suddenly smiled. So I“ asked him: What happened; why did you smile O Messenger of Allāh? He said: I am surprised at the believer and his apprehension due to his illness; were he to know what reward there is for him in the illness, he would have loved to be ill until he meets (his Lord, the Invincible and Majestic.”(٢

:The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said .٣

مَنْ مَرِضَ يَوْماً وَلَيْلَةً فَلَمْ يَشْكُ إِلَى عُوَّادِهِ، بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَهِ مَعَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلِ الرَّحْمَنِ، حَتَّى يَجُوزَ الصِّرَاطَ كَالْبَرْقِ اللاَّمِعِ.

Whosoever is ill for a day and night but does not complain about his situation to his“ visitors, Allāh would raise him on the Judgment Day with Prophet Ibrāhīm (as), the (Friend of the All-Merciful, so that he would cross the path like radiant lightening.”(٣

The meaning of complaint and shikāyah, however, should be understood properly. One who expresses the sensation of pain that he encounters cannot, for example, be known to be complaining

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Bihār al-Anwār, v. ٨١, pg. ٢٠٨ -١

Ibid., v. ٨١, pg. ٢٠۶ -٢

Ibid., v. ٨١, pg. ٢٠٣ -٣

against Almighty Allāh. In fact in some traditions of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) the expression "āh" from the ailing one is considered as one of the Names of Almighty Allāh. Observe :the following

:Ja'far bin Yahyā al-Khuzā'ī is reported to have narrated from his father that he said

دَخَلْتُ مَعَ أَبِی عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) عَلَى بَعْضِ مَوَالِيهِ يَعُودُهُ، فَرَأَيْتُ الرَّجُلَ يُكْثِرُ مِنْ قَوْلِ آهِ. فَقُلْتُ لَهُ: يَا أَخِی، اذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ وَاسْتَغِثْ بِهِ. فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع): "آهِ" اسْمٌ مِنْ أَسْمَاءِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى، فَمَنْ قَالَ آهِ، اسْتَغَاثَ بِاللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ.

I accompanied Imām al-Sādiq (as) who came to visit one of his [ailing] slaves, and I" saw the slave saying "āh" many times. So I said to him: O my brother, remember your Lord and seek His Support. Thereupon Imām al-Sādiq (as) said: 'Āh is a Name among the Names of Allāh, and whosoever says "āh" seeks the Help of Allāh, the Invincible (and Majestic.'"(١)

It should be known that expressing the sensation of pain by employing the word "āh" is in reality expressing one's poverty and need for perfection and bodily equilibrium. And it is a known fact that NONE but the All-Affluent and the Principal Curer (al-Shāfī) .can relieve the ailing patient

:Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) says

وَ إِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ .

(And when I turn sick, then He Alone Cures Me."(٢"

Therefore in reality, one is seeking the support of the Almighty, and is well-aware that no doctor or nurse or anyone whatsoever can relieve him from any kind of malady independently. Hence

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Bihār al-Anwār, v. ٨١, pg. ٢٠٢ -١

Holy Qur'ān, ٢۶:٨٠ -٢

by saying ‘Āh’ he is in reality calling ‘al-Shāfī’ (the Curer) or ‘Ghiyāth al-Mustaghīthīn’ (the Helper of the Seekers of help) and Allāh is the All-Knowing.

The Suffering Believer in the Garden of Paradise

There are purified souls who have been bestowed with inner vision and can thus behold the reality of different people. They need not to wait for the Hereafter to know the inner reality. Almighty Allāh has already gifted them with the knowledge thereof in this world. One such personality is Imām ‘Alī (as) who expressed this reality in the following dictum:

لَوْ كُشِفَ الْغِطَاءُ مَا ازْدَدْتُ يَقِيناً.

“If the curtains are unveiled no conviction would be added to what I have.”(1)

In other words, nothing among the higher realities such as Paradise and Hell was hidden for the Imām (as). He could behold things that others could not.

There is an interesting narrative in which Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said:

وُعِکَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ فَأَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) فَقُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ! إِنَّ أَبَا ذَرٍّ قَدْ وُعِکَ. فَقَالَ (ص): امْضِ بِنَا إِلَيْهِ نَعُودُهُ. فَمَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعاً، فَلَمَّا جَلَسْنَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص): كَيْفَ أَصْبَحْتَ يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ. قَالَ: أَصْبَحْتُ وَعِكاً يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. فَقَالَ (ص): أَصْبَحْتَ فِي رَوْضَةٍ مِنْ رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ...

“Abū Dharr [once] fell sick; so I came to the Messenger of Allāh and said: O Messenger of Allāh, verily Abū Dharr has fallen sick. He said: let us go to visit him. So, all of us together went to visit him. And when we sat besides him, the Messenger of Allāh asked him: O Abū Dharr, how

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1- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۴٠, pg. ١۵٣

did you confront your morning? He said: I have confronted the morning in sickness. The Holy Prophet (s) thereupon said: Surely you have confronted the morning while you are in a garden among the gardens of Paradise...”(١)

Here the Holy Prophet (s) beheld the kernel of Abū Dharr’s situation, and informed him of his higher rank which he could not vision.

Sadaqah – A Powerful Means of Curing the Sick

The human being due to his limited knowledge cannot perceive all the means to the cure of the different maladies and diseases. Further, since he or she perceives the world of matter and cannot witness the celestial realm (‘ālam al-malakūt) or beyond that, he or she is oblivious of so many other ways to the cure of maladies. This is where the important role of wahy (revelation) and Imāmate comes. Those entrusted with Divine secrets, acknowledging the need of unveiling them, have informed us of much to learn. With regard to curing the sick, we have traditions worthy of contemplation. Observe the following:

١. Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said:

دَاوُوا مَرْضَاكُمْ بِالصَّدَقهِ.

“Treat your sick by giving sadaqah.”(٢)

٢. He (as) is also reported to have said:

ذِكْرُنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ شِفَاءٌ مِنَ الْوَعْكِ وَالاَسْقَامِ وَوَسْوَاسِ الرَّيْبِ.

“Remembering us the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) is a cure from illness and diseases as well as from the insinuation of doubt.”(٣)

One should note however that giving sadaqah (alms) has some etiquette, a most important of which is al-mubāsharah which means that the sick person should himself or herself give the sadaqah. Observe the following tradition:

Imām al-Sādiq (as) is

۱- Mustadrak al-Wasā’il, v. ۱, pg. ۵۷

۲- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۸۱, pg. ۲۰۳

۳- Ibid., v. ۸۱, pg. ۲۰۳

:reported to have said

يُسْتَحَبُّ لِلْمَرِيضِ أَنْ يُعْطِيَ السَّائِلَ بِيَدِهِ وَيَأْمُرَ السَّائِلَ أَنْ يَدْعُوَ لَهُ.

It is recommended for the sick person to give a beggar with his own hands and tell" (him to pray for him."(١

?Why are Spiritual Illnesses Worse than Physical Maladies

One of the very important discussions that the ‘ulamā of akhlāq present in their ethical texts is how spiritual ailments are more dangerous to the human being than the physical illnesses. Mawlā Muhammad Narrāqī, the great ethician in his ethical :corpus Jāmi‘ al-Sa‘ādāt says in his introductory discussions on ethics

اعلم أن الإنسان منقسم إلى سر وعلن، وروح وبدن، ولكل منهما منافيات وملائمات، وآلام ولذات، ومهلكات ومنجيات. ومنافيات البدن وآلامه هى الأمراض الجسمانيه. وملائماته هى الصحه واللذات الجسمانيه. والمتكفل لبيان تفاصيل هذه الأمراض ومعالجاتها هو علم الطب. ومنافيات الروح وآلامه هى رذائل الأخلاق التى تهلكه وتشقيه. وصحته رجوعه إلى فضائلها التى تسعده وتنجيه، وتوصله إلى مجاوره أهل اللّه ومقربيه. والمتكفل لبيان هذه الرذائل ومعالجاتها هو (علم الأخلاق). ثم إن البدن مادى فانٍ، والروح مجردٌ باقٍ، فإن اتصف بشرائف الصفات كان فى البهجه والسعاده أبداً، وإن اتصف برذائلها كان فى العذاب والشقاوه مخلداً...

Know that the human being is divided into "the kernel" (sirr) and "the apparent"" ('alan) and [or in other words] "the spirit" and "the body" and for each of these two dimensions there are incompatibilities (munāfiyāt) and compatibilities (mulāyimāt), pains and pleasures, elements of destruction and salvation. The incompatibilities of the body and its pains are the physical illnesses whereas its compatibilities are good health and physical pleasures. And the discipline that caters to expound the

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Bihār al-Anwār, v. ٨١, pg. ٢٠٩ -١

details of these illnesses and their treatments is medicine. And the incompatibilities of the soul and its pains are bad characteristics that destroy it and make it wretched, and its wellbeing is to return towards good morals that bring it felicity and emancipate it and make it attain the neighborhood of the people of God and His Near ones, and the discipline that caters to expound these evil characteristics and their treatment is the discipline of ethics. Then it should be known that the body is material and prone to destruction, whereas the spirit and soul is eternal, and therefore if the soul characterizes itself with noble qualities it would be in the state of joy and felicity forever, but were it to characterize itself with evil ethics it would be in the state of (punishment and wretchedness forever…."(١

Therefore since the spirit has always to remain, one should be very careful and purify it before it is too late. The material body on the other hand would have to stay in this .world and probably turn into earth after burial

Spiritual Illnesses Is The Principal Cause

If one were to understand the aim of human life, the gravity of spiritual sickness over physical sickness would become more apparent. In fact, if we painstakingly ponder over the causes of the different illnesses, we would come to realize that the principal cause of many of the physical illnesses stem from spiritual illnesses, either from oneself or from others: sometimes the source of physical illnesses is oneself, sometimes others, and

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Jāmiʻ al-Saʻādāt, v. ١, pg. ۵ -١

at times, a product of cooperation with others. An example of the first is when a person has no sense of temperance and allows his faculty of desire to prevail over his faculty of intellect, and engages in overindulgence in eating, copulation, etc. Such a lifestyle would be replete with illnesses. Sometimes however, you are invited to a friend's house and served with delicious food, but because your friend did not observe some religious or hygienic precautions while cooking, you turn ill. If you are invited by one who, for example, does not care whether the meat he buys is from a believer or non believer or whether he earns through lawful or unlawful means, you would undoubtedly be affected spiritually. This can then be a basis for immoderation, which would lead to physical illnesses. An example of the third situation is when genetically made food is produced, and you show your cooperation in purchasing the same. Here the fault is both yours and the producer's. If your purchase is due to your mundane attachments and you know that the producer's aim is nothing but to satisfy his capitalistic demands, you would have cooperated with him to cause physical illnesses in your self. Here greed and avarice enveloped your intellect and you were led to physical illnesses. However, if the circumstances are such that you have to cope with these foods and you have no option, then you remain in danger of the physical illnesses but can be free from

.spiritual maladies

The Traveling Physician

Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have described the Prophet (s) in the following manner in one of his sermons compiled in the Nahju’l Balāghah:

طَبِيبٌ دَوَّارٌ بِطِبِّهِ، قَدْ أَحْكَمَ مَرَاهِمَهُ، وَأَحْمَى مَوَاسِمَهُ، يَضَعُ ذلِكَ حَيْثُ الْحَاجَةُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ قُلُوبٍ عُمْيٍ وَآذَانٍ صُمٍّ وَأَلْسِنَةٍ بُكْمٍ، مُتَتَبِّعٌ بِدَوَائِهِ مَوَاضِعَ الْغَفْلَةِ وَمَوَاطِنَ الْحَيْرَةِ.

“The Prophet (s) was like a traveling physician who has set ready his ointments and heated his instruments. He uses them wherever the need arises for curing blind hearts, deaf ears, and dumb tongues. He went with his medicines to the places of negligence and places of perplexity.”(1)

One of the excellent methods of treating the ailing ones is to go to them for treatment. Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī (as) calls the Holy Prophet (s) طَبِيبٌ دَوَّارٌ بِطِبِّهِ tabībun dawārun bitibbih- A traveling physician. Physicians who deal with the human body normally treat others in return for payment. This is because it is a means of their livelihood. Nevertheless, not all physicians have the same financial status. Whereas some work in certain hospitals or clinics, others own hospitals and clinics themselves. There are different poverty-stricken areas in the world where due to indigence, people do not have the privilege of getting treated from illnesses. Physicians who truly have concern for all the poor to get cured would either personally arrange a team of doctors to visit the area, and thereafter treat the various patients, or if resources do not permit, try to form a friendly circle of doctors who would voluntarily contribute

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1- Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon ۱۰۸

what they can. By visiting these poverty-stricken areas, not only would they practically show their concern for the ailing ones, but also practise the Prophet’s way of life in the physical dimension. Hence, although this beautiful narrative of Imām ‘Alī (as) refers to the spiritual dimension, it can also be applied in the life of the physicians .of the body too

A very interesting narrative is reported in the historical text al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah of Ibn Hishām, where the practical import of Imām ‘Alī’s (as) statement is brilliantly :reflected. Ibn Hishām quotes Ibn Ishāq to have said

فَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللُّهِ (ص) يَعْرُضُ نَفْسَهُ فِى الْمَوَاسِمِ إذاَ كَانَتْ عَلى قَبَائِلِ العَرَبِ، يَدْعُوْهُمْ إِلـى اللُّهِ، وَيُخْبِرُهُمْ أَنَّه نَبىٌّ مُرْسَلٌ، وَيَسْئَلُهُمْ أَنْ يُصَدِّقُوْهُ...

The Messenger of Allāh (s) would present himself to [to the people] in [different]“ occasions; and when he would confront the Arabs, he would invite them to Allāh, (inform them that He is an Apostle of Allāh, and seek their verification....”(١

:And in the same book Ibn Ishāq is reported to have said

وَحَدَّثَنِىْ حُسين بن عَبْدِ اللُّهِ بن عُبَيْدِ اللُّهِ بن عَبَّاسٍ، قاَلَ: سَمِعْتُ رَبِيْعَه بن عباد، يُحَدِّثُهُ أَبِى: قال إِنِّى لَغُلَامٌ شَابٌّ مَعَ أَبِى بمنى، وَ رَسُولُ اللُّهِ (ص) يَقِفُ عَلى مَنَازِلِ الْقَبَائِلِ مِنَ الْعَرَبِ، فَيَقُوْلُ: يَا بَنِى فُلان، إِنِّى رَسُوْلُ اللُّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ، يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَعْبُدُو اللُّهَ وَلاَ تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئاً، وَ اَنْ تَخْلَعُوْا مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ مِنْ هُذِهِ الأَنْدَادِ، وَاَنْ تُأْمِنُوا بِى، وَتُصَدِّقُوْا بِىْ، وَتَمْنَعُوْنِى حَتّى أُبَيِّنُ عَنِ اللُّهِ مَا بَعَثَنِىْ بِهِ.

:Ubaydullāh bin’Abbās narrates: I saw my father telling Rabī‘a bin ‘Ubbād“‘

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al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah, v. ٢, pp. ٣۵-٣۶ -١

During my youth I was once together with my father in Minā; I observed that the" Holy Prophet (s) would visit the different tents (manāzil) of the Arabs, and say: 'O children of such and such personality, certainly I am a Messenger of Allāh towards you, who invites you to worship Allāh and that you must not associate anyone with Him, and renounce the [imaginary] partners that you worship other than Him, and believe in Me and accept me and protect me so that I may expound for you from Allāh (that which He has sent me with.'"(١)

It is interesting to note that in his propagation to Banū 'Āmir, a person called Firās bin 'Abdillāh is reported to have said about him:'I swear by Allāh, if I would have this youth from Quraysh, I would have ruled over the Arabs by him. Thereafter addressing the Holy Prophet (s) he said that we can only pay our oath of allegiance to you on the condition that you make me your successor after you. Here was a very sensitive moment. If the Holy Prophet (s) was merely after gaining support of his personal fame, he would have consented to this transaction. But it was not a matter of :personal interests. The Holy Prophet (s) said

أَلأَمْرُ إِلـى اللّٰهِ يَضَعُ حَيْثُ يَشَاء...

(The matter is with Allāh, He would place in whoever's hand He wishes..."(٢"

As a result, they did not listen to the Holy Prophet (s) and remained adamant in their .disbelief

Our muballighūn should emulate

Ibid., pg. ٣۶ -١

Ibid., v. ٢, pg. ٣٨ -٢

this highly important tradition of the Holy Prophet (s) within their own limitations. :There is a law, we must understand, which prevails all the verses of this supplication

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْساً إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا .

(Allāh does not burden a soul save what it can bear."(1)"

Hence, each one of us is responsible according to his or her abilities. The resourceful, for example, would undertake great ventures to disseminate Islam in different parts of the world, and thus try to treat the maladies of the spiritually sick, whereas those who have limited resources could struggle to do the most from the least that they have at their disposal. There is another very beautiful law in the holy Qur'ān that implicitly tells us how to make advantage of the limited resources at our disposal. The secret is 'struggle.' The lazy carpenter by making small things, would worry about his financial status and perhaps seek unlawful means, but the diligent carpenter who possesses the similar tools would struggle hard and increase his tools so that he can :produce better wooden items and develop himself financially. The Holy Qur'ān says

وَ أَنْ لَيْسَ لِلإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعـــــى .

(And there is nothing for man save that which he strives for."(2)"

We should remember that the extent of the struggle would reflect the firmness of our resolution to assist the ailing ones and the intensity of our concern for their well-.being

?How Can We Contribute in Dispelling Illnesses from Others

It should be well understood by now that seeking the well-being of others is not limited to prayer

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Holy Qur'ān, ۲:۲۸۶ -۱

Holy Qur'ān, ۵۳:۳۹ -۲

only. Our contributions would vary according to the ability that we have. Further, we should understand how grave is our need for spiritual well-being. Therefore, we should not be oblivious of this fundamental and decisive dimension of the human .beings

Those who can create conditions that would obliterate illnesses from the society are responsible to do the needful, those who can assist others in guiding them to observe precaution before they suffer dangerous illnesses have the duty to do so, those who can financially afford to assist others in getting their sickness treated should take the noble step of doing so; and those who do not have any of the preceding status due their limited powers, are expected to pray for the ailing and visit them as well. For those who have more power, they are required to play a greater role in all the areas .that determine the treatment of the ailing ones

As we humbly pray to Allāh for the well-being of everyone, we should not forget ourselves, for although we may enjoy very good physical health, but have we tried to diagnose ourselves spiritually yet? Are we sure that we do not suffer from any of the spiritual illnesses? Is spiritual illness so insignificant due to the absence of any immediate physical pain? If one looks at the depth of the matter, he or she would realize that eternal salvation is entirely dependent on the spiritual well-being of a .person

Our prayers should be continual. This is because persistence in

prayer is a corollary of "true concern". One who has no concern would not be persistent in his prayer. In fact, as we said in our introduction to the first volume of this commentary, du'a is a reflection of one's true state. There is complete harmony .between one's spirit and the prayer that one utters

O Allāh, Fill Our Poverty With Your Needlessness

point

أَللَّهُمَّ سُدَّ فَقْرَنا بِغِناكَ

OAllāh, fill (sudda) our poverty (faqranā) with Your affluence (bighināka). This verse does not pertain to the need of the commonly needy individuals, but a need that is shared by every human being, or rather every contingent being(۱), which due to the nature of its essence, possesses nothing of its own. Therefore, even the apparently self-sufficient among the created beings are termed poor and needy in this verse. Similarly, ghināka (lit. Your Needlessness) is not the common self-sufficiency shared by some of the human beings, but that which is restricted only to Almighty Allāh. In reality, if one understands the relation between the Creator and the creation, self-sufficiency makes no sense with regard to the creation at all. The Holy Qur'ān alluding :to this says

يا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلــى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ .

O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allāh, and Allāh - He is the All-" (Sufficient, the All-Laudable."(۲

لَهُ مَا فِى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِى الأَرْضِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ .

To Him only belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth; and indeed Allāh " is the All-sufficient, the

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Contingent beings are those that do not exist essentially nor are they impossible to -۱ exist. Therefore in order for them to exist, they always need a cause. All the created

.beings are such

Holy Qur’ān, ۳۵:۱۵ -۲

(All-laudable.”(١

:And in his well-known supplication of ‘Arafah, Imām Husayn (as) humbly cries

إِلٰهِى: أَنَا الْفَقِيرُ فِى غِنَاىَ، فَكَيْفَ لا أَكُونُ فَقِيراً فِى فَقْرِى؟

O God, I am the poor in my self-sufficiency; therefore how can I not be needy in my“
”?state of need

:And Imām ‘Alī (as) in his famous whisperings (munājāt) cries

مَوْلاىَ يَا مَوْلاىَ: أَنْتَ الْغَنِىُّ وَأَنَا الْفَقِيرُ، وَهَلْ يَرْحَمُ الْفَقِيرَ إِلا الْغَنِىُّ؟

My Master, My Master, You are the All-Sufficient and I am the needy; and who other“
”?than the All-Sufficient can have mercy on the needy

:And in the recommended prayer after ‘Asr, we introduce ourselves as

...لا يَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِهِ نَفْعاً وَلا ضَرّاً وَلا مَوْتاً وَلا حَيَاةً وَلا نُشُوراً...

one who does not own any benefit, nor harm, nor death, nor life, nor...“
(resurrection...”(٢

?Can we turn into the necessary being

Faqranā (lit. our poverty) refers to the utterly dependent state of the human being, which in the language of metaphysicians is termed as ‘contingency’ (imkān), and in the vision of mystics ‘manifestation’ (zuhūr). All that exists other than Allāh does not have existence of its own. To come into being and subsist in any state whatsoever requires the Divine Will. The following verse of the Qur’ān expounds the continual :process of causation with relation to the creation

قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ هُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ .

”’.Say, ‘God is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-paramount“

It should be noted that Khāliqu in the above verse denotes perpetual creation. This

concept is also beautifully expounded by Mullā Sadrā in his philosophical texts, where ,he intellectually establishes

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Ibid., ۲۲:۶۴ -۱

Miftāh al-Falāh, v. ۱, pg. ۱۹۸ -۲

through his well-known theory of transubstantial motion (harakah jawhariyyah), the fact that every contingent being receives existence every moment. Reflect over the :following verses of the Holy Qur'ān

.أَفَعَيِينَا بِالْخَلْقِ الأَوَّلِ بَلْ هُمْ فِى لَبْسٍ مِنْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ .

Were We exhausted by the first creation? Rather they are in doubt about a new" (creation."(1)

.وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِىَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ .

And you see the mountains, which you suppose to be stationary, while they drift like" (passing clouds..."(2)

The mystics also vision this reality when they behold this universe. 'Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadāni says: "Small children, observing a lamp burning continuously, would naturally think that what we see is one single flame. But the grownups know very well that it is a series of different flames appearing and disappearing moment by moment. And from the viewpoint of mystics this must necessarily be the case with everything in (the world except God."(3)

Having understood the aforesaid, we ask: Is it possible for the human being to lose his or her contingent identity and become Essential and Necessary in existence? In other words, is it possible for us to change from the utterly poor to the absolutely affluent? Intellectually speaking, such a phenomenon can never transpire for it is evidently impossible. This is because, 'a Necessary Being' (wājib al-wujūd) is only necessary and essential when it did not and does not depend on any kind of cause whatsoever. If one says that a certain being was contingent (mumkin) and thereafter turned into a

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۱- Holy Qur'ān, ۵۰:۱۵

۲- Ibid., ۲۷:۸۸

۳- Zubdat al-Haqā'iq, pg. ۶۲

Necessary Being (wājib), this would depict nothing but absurdity. This is because an entity changing from contingency (imkān) to necessity (wujūb) means change of the essence (dhāt) of the entity. This change either was causeless or needed a cause. If we say that it did not require a cause and changed by accident, we have said what is intellectually absurd. If we say it needed a cause, then that would also be incorrect because for something to be necessary no cause is needed whatsoever. A Necessary Being is Causeless. It is never brought about. Hence a contingent being can never turn .into a Necessary Being

Therefore, what exactly do we mean when we utter the above verse of this ?supplication? What do we actually seek from Almighty Allāh

One of the Sublime Names of Almighty Allāh is al-Samad. There are several meanings for this name, but they in reality are corollaries (lawāzim) of its exact lexical meaning(١) which is: 'One who is besought and every entity returns to Him for any need.' One of the corollary meanings of al-Samad is 'the All-compact (al-musmat).' :Imām al-Husayn (as) is reported to have said

آَلصَّمَدُ: الَّذِی لاَ جَوْفَ لَهُ...

".As-Samad is One Who has no hollowness"

Due to His Infinite Existence, there is no gap of deficiency in any of His perfections. If He is All-Knowing, then there is no perforation in His Infinite knowledge, if He is All-Powerful, there is no kind of power that he lacks... In short, He has no kind of deficiency in the

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al-Mīzān, v. ٢٠, pg. ٣٩١ -١

level of His Essence, Attributes or Actions. Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī in his Sharh al-Asmā’ :says

فانّه لمّا كان بسيط الحقيقه واجداً للكمالات والخيرات لا يسلب عنه خير، كان كالمصمّت الّذى لا جوف له - تعالى عن الشبيه و النظير علوّاً كبيراً - فهو بخلاف الممكن الّذى هو الأجوف النّاقص الجائع الفاقد لكلّ كمال، فى مرتبه ذاته بذاته...

Because His reality is Simple(۱) and Non-composite [Basīt al-Haqīqa] and He“ possesses all the perfections and virtues, and does not lack any goodness (khayr), He is like a compact entity (al-musammat) that does not have any hollowness- highly exalted is He from comparison and similarity- and so He (Allāh) is contrary to a contingent being (al-mumkin) who is hollow (al-ajwaf), imperfect, hungry, and lacks (any perfection in the level of his essence...”(۲

Therefore, every dependent entity is hollow in its reality. Only Allāh is al-Samad. Several parables are given to show this relation. One such relation is that of the ocean and its waves. The waves have nothing of their own yet they seem to be different to the Ocean. Perhaps the best comparison is that of the reflection and the mirror. The .creation is like the reflection of Divine Names in the Mirror

Having considered the aforesaid, what do we mean when we ask Almighty Allāh to fill ?up our existential poverty with His existential affluence

Seeking the Proximity of Allāh

One of the interpretations of this sacred verse is to seek the state of human perfection through utter submission to Allāh, such that the human being gains sufficiency (ghinā) through the

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۱- Here ‘simplicity’ denotes the non-compositeness of God. (Author)

۲- Sharh al-Asmā’ , pg. ۳۶۵

Absolutely Sufficient (al-Ghanī). The following sacred tradition (hadith al-qudsī) refers :to this exalted station

يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ: أَنَا غَنِيٌّ لاَ أَفْتَقِرُ، أَطِعْنِي فِيمَا أَمَرْتُكَ أَجْعَلْكَ غَنِيّاً لاَ تَفْتَقِرْ. يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ: أَنَا حَيٌّ لاَ أَمُوتُ، أَطِعْنِي فِيمَا أَمَرْتُكَ أَجْعَلُكَ حَيّاً لاَ تَمُوتُ. يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ: أَنَا أَقُولُ لِلشَّيْءِ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ، أَطِعْنِي فِيمَا أَمَرْتُكَ أَجْعَلُكَ تَقُولُ لِلشَّيْءِ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ.

O offspring of Adam, I am the All-sufficient, and will never become needy; obey Me,“ and I will make you All-sufficient such that you will never become needy; O offspring of Ādam, I am All-living and will never die, obey Me, and I will make you All-living and you will never die; O offspring of Adam, I say [to a thing] be! And it is; Obey Me in what I have commanded you, and I will make you such that when you say be! [to a thing], it (would come into being.”(١

In order to attain this fundamental level of proximity (qurb), which is the highest point one must rise through the way-stations of (السـير الى الله) of the first spiritual journey human perfection, which are expounded by the experts of gnosis in their manuals of direction. The fundamental stages, however, as we discussed earlier, are yaqzah and tawbah. It should also be understood that for one to maintain himself or herself on the straight path and never divert from it, he or she needs a master of gnosis (‘irfān) who has already traversed the levels of perfection and has the ability to take others

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Uddat al-Dā’ī, pg. ٣١٠‘ -١

.as well

Seeking The Infinite

Another possible interpretation of this verse of the blessed supplication is to seek greater perfection of the Divine attributes one already possesses. The authoritative mystics in their works present different levels(۱) in the journey of human perfection. One of the basic classifications they propound is that the human being has two :fundamental journeys

Ibn Maytham al-Bahrānī, in his Sharhu Mi'at Kalimah quoting the mystical scholars :says

السَّفَرُ سَفَرَانِ، سَفَرٌ إِلى اللّٰهِ، وَسَفَرٌ فِى اللّٰهِ. وَالأَوَّلُ إِشَارَةٌ إِلى إِنْتِقَالاَتِ النَّفْسِ فِى مَرَاتِبِ السُّلُوْكِ، وَالثَّانِى إِشَارَةٌ إِلى إِنْتِقَالِهَا فِى دَرَجَاتِ الْوُصُوْلِ...

There are two journeys: journey to Allāh, and journey in Allāh; the first alludes to the" transformations of the soul in the different levels of wayfaring, and the second refers (to its transformations in the stages of attainment (wusūl)..."(۲

۱. Al-sayr ilā Allāh السير إلى الله (Journey towards Allāh) which culminates with the state of .tawhīd when one does not see anything save Allāh

۲. Al-sayr fī Allāh السير فى الله (Journey in Allāh) which never culminates, for it has no end. When we say "in God", one should not conjecture that God is a vessel ('arf) in which the human being travels. Far is He from any kind of limitation and imperfection whatsoever. Al-sayr fī Allāh means journeying in the Attributes of God, or the continual process of coloring oneself with the Divine Attributes. And because Allāh is al-Samad and Infinite, all His perfect attributes are infinite too. And since the journey from the finite to the Infinite is infinite, the human being, however

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۱- It should be noted that the well-known classification, which is not contradictory to what we have mentioned above, is the al-Asfar al-Arb'ah (the four journeys) which

Sadru'l Muta 'allihīn and his school of thought has adopted. We have not mentioned .this due to the limited scope of this work

Sharh Mi'at Kalimah, v. ١, pg. ۴٠ -٢

exalted he may be, is still in need of more and more perfection. The following famous :dictum of Imām ‘Alī (as) according to some scholars(١) refers to this very journey

آهِ مِنْ قِلَّةِ الزَّادِ، وَطُولِ الطَّرِيقِ، وَ بُعْدِ السَّفَرِ...

(O, how little is the provision, and how long the path and distant the journey…!”(٢“

Hence, there will never be an occasion when the human being would be needless of .this prayer

Readers however should note that for the one who has not attained the proximity of Allāh, ‘seeking more’ carries no meaning. He should strive to cover the first journey so that he may be able to swim across the oceans of the different names of Almighty Allāh. Scholars of ethics however advise that in such cases when the supplicant realizes how remote he is from uttering such lofty words, he should pray with utter humility and shame, and while feeling repentant of his state of separation, pin his hopes entirely on the One who can jerk him to start his journey and later have the .ability to swim across the vast oceans of His Attributes

O Allāh, Change Our Unpleasant State Into Your Beautiful State

point

أَللُّهُمَّ غَيِّرْ سُوْءِ حَالَنَا بَحُسْنِ حَالِكَ

O Allāh, Change Our Unpleasant State Into Your Beautiful State

In order to properly understand the above verse, it is imperative to know the meaning of the word “husn” in the phrase ‘bi husni Hālik.’ According to Rāghib al-Isfahāni, the :word husn means

الْحُسْنُ: عِبَارَةٌ عَنْ كُلِّ مُبْهِجٍ مَرْغُوْبٍ فِيهِ، وَذَلِكَ ثَلَاثَه أَضْرُبٍ: مُسْتَحْسَنٌ مِن جِهَهِ الْعَقْلِ، مُسْتَحْسَنٌ مِنْ جِهَهِ الْهَوَى، مُسْتَحْسَنٌ مِنْ جِهَهِ

۱- Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmolī alludes to this point in his lessons on Ibn ‘Arabī’s Fusūs al-Hikam. See also ‘Buhuth Fī ‘Ilm al-Nafs’ [Transcripts of the notes of Sayyid Kamāl al-Haydarī on the section about the human soul from Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī’s philosophical poetry al-Manzūmah, page ۲۹۸]

۲- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۳۴, pg. ۲۸۴

الْحِسّ وَالْحَسَنَهُ يُعبّر عَنْهَا عَنْ كُلِّ ما يَسُرُّ مِنْ نِعْمَهٍ تَنَالُ الإِنْسَان فِيْ نَفْسِهِ وَبَدَنِهِ وَاَحْوَالِهِ وَالسَّيِّئَهُ تضادّهَا...

:Husn is every pleasant and desirable thing. And it is of three kinds“

- ;Pleasant according to the intellect
- ;Pleasant according to worldly inclination
- .Pleasant according to sense perception

And the word al-hasanah is employed to mean every pleasant blessing that the human being attains in his spirit, body or states. And al-sayyi’ah is opposite to (that...”(١)

The personal pronoun “kāf” here implies that we are after the utter Beauty بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ of Almighty Allāh, who is the Most Pleasant and Beloved(٢). We can therefore not limit the extensions of husn to what al-Isfahānī enumerates in his lexicon of Qur’ānic words. The universal sense of the word itself allows every pleasant entity to come under its conceptual umbrella. In addition, the Husnu‘l Hāl (the pleasant state) .possessed by Almighty Allāh is beyond intellectual and sensory perception

It should be noted that the main components of husn are ‘mubhij‘ (pleasant, delightful, etc.) and marghūb fīh (desirable). This is one key to understanding the .various extensions of beautiful entities

:The particle “bi” in the phrase ‘bi husni hālik’ here can have two probable meanings

ilā). Therefore the prayer would إلى It can mean into(٣) (the same as the particle (١) read: “O Allāh change our unpleasant state into Your Beautiful State”. This also reminds us of another supplication which is recommended to be recited on the first :day of the solar year – Nawrūz

...حَوِّل حَالَنَا إلى اَحْسَنِ الْحَالِ...

change our state into...

Mufradātu Alfāzi'l Qur'ān, pg. ۲۳۵ -۱

In his Mufradāt al-Isfahānī has extensively discussed about the etymology of the -۲ word 'إله ilāh.' He reports different origins for the same. One of these, he says, is 'وِلاه wilāh' (passionate love). At the onset it was pronounced as wilāh; thereafter the letter wāw (و) was changed into the letter hamza (إ) and it became ilāh. And God was named wilāh because every created being has passionate love for Him. Al-Isfahānī says: قال بعض الحكماء: الله محبوب الأشياء كلها، وعليه دل قوله تعالى: وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ. "A certain theosophist is reported to have said, 'Allāh is the beloved of all things.' And upon this does the following speech of Almighty Allāh indicate: 'And there is nothing save that it glorifies Allāh and praises Him, but you do not comprehend their glorification.'" [Mufradātu Alfāzi'l Qur'ān, pg. ۸۳]

Dr. Rāmīl Badī 'Ya'qūb, Mawsū'at al-Nahw wa al-Sarf wa al-I'rāb, pg. ۱۸۶ -۳

(the most beautiful state...(1)

It can denote sababiyyah (mediation)(2), and thus the prayer would read: "O Allāh (2) change my evil state by Your Beautiful State."

بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ Hāl حَال denotes 'a changing state.' Due to his imperfect nature, the human being undergoes a movement of perfection and thus "hāl" can be correctly attributed to him or her. But is it correct to employ it for Almighty Allāh? Does His Exalted Essence undergo change? Intellectually speaking, God, Who is Absolutely Perfect, can never undergo change. Change manifests deficiency and imperfection, while Almighty Allāh is Absolutely Perfect. Thus, it would be incorrect to talk about change with regard to His Sublime Essence. In a morning supplication narrated in the prayer manual Balad al-Amīn(3), we glorify Almighty Allāh saying:

يَاَ مَنْ لاَ يتغيّر مِنْ حَالٍ إِلـى حَالٍ!

"O One Who does not change from one state to another!"

And in one of his sermons, while glorifying Almighty Allāh, Amīru'l Mu'minīn'Alī (as) says:

...الَّذِىْ لا يَحُوْلُ وَلاَ يزولُ وَلاَ يَجُوْزُ عَلَيْهِ الاَفُولُ ...

"One Who neither changes nor ceases to exist, nor is He transitory."(4)

In expounding the meaning of "lā yahūlu" 'Allāmah Majlisī(5) in his remarks says: lā yahūlu ay lā yataghayyaru [lā yahūlu means 'He does not change.']

Then what does 'bi husni Hālika' mean in this noble supplication? To answer this, we need to understand that the extensions of concepts employed to describe different attributes of contingent entities (mumkināt), are not completely the same as those of the Absolute Perfect Being. When we say that a certain person, for

1- Mafātīh al-Jinān, v. 1, pg. 299

۲- Ibid.

۳- Balad al-Amīn, v. ۱, pg. ۶۰

۴- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۴, pg. ۲۵۴

۵- Ibid., v. ۴, pg. ۲۵۷

example, is kind and merciful, we mean that he or she has a sense of pity which follows acts of support to others. But we can never conceive the state of pity which is an experience of change in the heart with regard to the Exalted Being. Similar is the case with 'hāl' which when employed for Almighty Allāh is not 'a changing state' but rather His Exalted Reality of Absolute Perfection that always was and will ever be. Small wonder it is that Imām Abu'l Hasan al-Ridā (as) in one of his debates with a theologian hired by Ma 'mūn is reported to have employed the word "Hāl" for Almighty Allāh, which of course does not depict "a changing state". He says:

...لأَنَّه لاَ يَكُوْنُ أَنْ يُحْدِثَ نَفْسَهُ ولاَ يَتَغَيَّرُ عَنْ حالِهِ، تَعالى اللّٰه عَنْ ذٰلِكَ...

"...This is because it is impossible that he created Himself, nor does He change from His State, Exalted is Allāh from that..."(١)

Therefore when we say "bi Husni Hālika" we do not mean "a changing state", Exalted is Allāh from any deficiency whatsoever.

Physical Extensions of Husnu'l Hāl

Our trend so far has been to consider both the apparent as well as the subtle meanings of this noble supplication. In this verse, however, it is clear that the human being opts for the Infinite Beauty and thus the state of physical beauty is not taken into consideration. Nevertheless, it is important to know what Islam has to say with regard to physical beauty. Does Islam consider physical beauty (whose pleasant (mubhij) state

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١- Ibid., v. ١٠, pg. ٣٣٤

the sense perception admits) as insignificant and trivial? Ample proofs indicate that although physical beauty is pleasant and important it should not be reckoned as a distinction in the absolute sense. Whereas the Holy Qur'ān promises damsels with beautiful features(۱) for the believing men as well as handsome young men(۲) for heavenly women, and therefore does not consider physical beauty as insignificant, it warns the believing men and women that even if an unbeliever is so beautiful or so handsome, you are not allowed to marry with him or her. Consider the following :verses

وَلاَ تَنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَاتِ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنَّ وَلَأَمَهٌ مُؤْمِنَهٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُشْرِكَهٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ وَلاَ تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنُوا وَلَعَبْدٌ مُؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ أُوْلَئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّهِ وَالْمَغْفِرَهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ .

Do not marry idolatresses until they embrace faith. A faithful slave girl is better than" an idolatress, though she should impress you. And do not marry [your daughters] to idolaters until they embrace faith. A faithful slave is better than an idolater, though he should impress you. Those invite [others] to the Fire, but God invites to paradise and pardon, by His will, and He clarifies His signs for the people so that they may take (admonition."(۳

It should not be misconceived that Islam discourages one to marry with the physically beautiful. There are traditions which clearly encourage one to be a companion of one who enjoys beautiful features. Imām Abu'l Hasan (al-Ridā) (as) is reported to have

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۱- Holy Qur'ān, ۵۶:۲۲

۲- Ibid., ۵۶:۱۷

۳- Ibid., ۲:۲۲۱

:said

ثَلاثَةٌ يَجْلُونَ الْبَصَرَ: النَّظَرُ إِلَى الْخُضْرَهِ، وَالنَّظَرُ إِلَى الْمَاءِ الْجَارِى، وَالنَّظَرُ إِلَى الْوَجْهِ الْحَسَنِ.

Three things enlighten the eye: (١) Looking at greenery, (٢) looking at running water,“ (and (٣) looking at a beautiful face (al-wajh al-hasan).”(١

That which Islam considers wrong is to establish the basis of one’s marriage on material interests. Physical beauty without morality would create nothing but chaos in one’s family life. In addition, purity of descent is also highly significant as spiritual heredity plays a fundamental role in one’s future generation. Imām al-Sādiq (as) is :reported to have said

قَامَ النَّبِىّ (ص) خَطِيْبًا فَقَالَ: أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِيَّاكُمْ وَخَضْرَاءُ الدِّمَن. قِيْلَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ (ص): وَمَا خَضْرَاءُ الدِّمَن؟ قَالَ: اَلْمَرْأَةُ الْحَسنَاء فِى مَنْبَتِ السُّوْءِ.

The Holy Prophet (s) once addressing the people said: O people, beware of the“ verdure of the dung. He was asked:’O Messenger of Allāh, ‘And what does the verdure of the dung mean?’ The Holy Prophet (s) said: ‘A beautiful woman (al-hasnā)’ ”’.from unpleasant roots

!Effulgence of the Face

There is however another group of traditions that talk of spiritual light and the effulgence of the face. They also instruct the aspirants of marriage that the fundamental criteria of spousal selection is ‘the brilliance of the heart which is manifest on the face’. Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said that the Holy :Prophet (s) said

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّٰهِ (ص): أَفْضَلُ نِسَاءِ أُمَّتِى أَصْبَحُهُنَّ وَجهاً وَأَقَلُّهُنَّ مَهْراً.

The best of the women of my Nation are the most radiant in complexion and seek the“ (least of dowry.”(٢

Note that the word أَصْبَحُهُنَّ “asbahahunna”

۱- Wasā’il al-Shī‘a, v. ۵, pg. ۳۴۰

۲- Usūl al-Kāfī, v. ۵, pg. ۳۲۴

ajmalahunna", which means that the" اَجْمَلَهُنَّ is employed in the above tradition and not yardstick of excellence and perfection is radiance and luminance of the complexion .and not physical beauty

In short, while Islam encourages physical beauty and reckons it as something good and naturally pleasant, it warns us from bartering our spiritual beauty for physical :beauty. There is a prophetic tradition that says

أللّٰهُ جَمِيْلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمالَ.

".Allāh is Beautiful and He Loves beauty"

Beauty appreciated by the intellect likewise is naturally lovable and pleasant. In fact one of the proofs of God's existence is by appreciating the orderliness of the world of creation through the intellect. The intellect appreciates that we live in the most beautiful system. In religious terminology this world is known as al-nizām al-ahsan (The most beautiful system). The holy Qur'ān terms the entire creation of Allāh as :beautiful. Observe the following verse

أَلَّذِی أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ خَلَقَهُ .

(One Who Made Beautiful every thing that He Created."(۱"

The beauty of every creature can be well appreciated by intellectually considering the .orderliness of its system, and its relation with the rest of the world of creation

Husnu'l Hāl – A Unique State of Utter Ecstasy

The contemporary mystic-scholar, Āllāmah Hasan Zadeh Āmolī, may the Almighty :Allāh protect his noble presence, in his treatise- Nūrun'Alā Nūr(۲), says

سعی کن تا به آب برسی با اینکه از آب بریده نیستی. و چون به آب رسیده ای آن وقت است که حسن حال داری و ابتهاج تو به وصف نمی آید. در دعای مأثور آمده است که: (اللّهُمّ غَیّرْ سُوءَ حَالِنَا بحُسْنِ حَالِكَ) . پس خدای تعالی

۱- Holy Qur’ān, ۳۲:۷

۲- Nūrun ‘Alā Nūr, section ۹, pg. ۷۸

حسن حال دارد، آری این حسن حال همانست که شیخ در فصل هجدهم نمط بهجت و سرور «اشارات» فرمود: «أجل مبتهج بشی ء هو الاول بذاته». فافهم.

Try to reach the water, although you are not cut off from water. And when you reach“ the water, you would have husnu ‘l hāl and your joy would be inexpressible. In one of the narrated supplications we read: O Allāh change our unpleasant state into your Beautiful State. Thus Almighty God Has the State of Husnu’l Hāl. Yes, this State of Joy (Husnu’l Hāl) is that very state that Shaykh (Ibn Sinā) speaks about in chapter :eighteen of the section on Joy and Happiness of his monumental work al-Ishārāt

أَجَلُّ مُبْتَهجٍ بِشَئْ ءٍ هُوَ الأَوَّلُ بِذَاتِهِ.

The Being that has the greatest joy in a thing is the First (i.e. God) as having joy in His (Essence.”(۱)

With regard to Almighty Allāh’s sincere servants, the state of Ridā is known to be the state of joy and ecstasy. Shaykh al-Rā’īs also mentions this in section nine of his :monumental al-Ishārāt, as follows

العَارِفُ هَشٌّ بَشٌّ بَسَّامٌ، يُبَجِّلُ الصَّغِيْرَ مِنْ تَوَاضُعِهِ مِثْلَ مَا يُبَجِّلُ الْكَبِيْرَ، وَ يَنْبَسِطُ مِنَ النَّبِيْهِ. وَكَيْفَ لاَ يَهُشُّ، وَهُوَ فَرْحَان بِا لْحَقِّ وَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ- فَإِنَّهُ يَرَى فِيْهِ الْحَقَّ؟! وَكَيْفَ لاَ يُسَوِّى وَالْجَمْعُ عِنْدَهُ سَوَاسِيَه أَهْلُ الرَّحْمَهِ قَدْ شَغَلُوْا بِا لْبَاطِلِ؟!

The Gnostic (‘ārif) is bright faced, friendly and smiling. Due to his modesty he honors“ the young as he honors the old. He is as pleased with the unclearheaded as he is with the alert. How

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[al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt, pg. ۳۵۰ [trans. By Shams Inati, pg. ۷۸ – Translation -۱

could he not be bright-faced when he enjoys the Truth (i.e. God) and everything other than the Truth, for he sees the Truth even in everything other than the Truth. Furthermore, how could he not treat all as equal when, to him all are equal! They are objects of mercy preoccupied with falsehoods."(1)

Avicenna's statement "... for he sees the Truth even in everything other than the Truth" reminds us of the Holy Prophet (s), and the Holy Imāms of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as). Imām 'Alī (as) is reported to have said:

مَا رَأَيْتُ شَيْئًا إِلاَّ وَرَأَيْتُ اللَّهَ قَبْلَهُ وَبَعْدَهُ وَمَعَهُ.

"I did not see anything save that I saw Allāh before it, after it, and with it."

A similar dictum is reported also from Imām al-Sādiq (as). Some analysts say that the following tradition also alludes to the sublime state of ecstasy and joy of the Leader of martyrs, Imām al-Husayn (as), as he neared his supreme sacrifice, which guaranteed the salvation of Islam forever: Shaykh Sadūq in his Ma'āni al-Akhbār reports Imām al-Sajjād (as) to have said:

لماّ اشتَدَّ الأمر بِالحسين بن على عليهما الصلاه والسلام نظر إليه من كان معه فإذا هو بخلافهم، لأنّهم كلما اشتد الأمر تغيرت ألوانهم، وارتعدت فرائصهم، ووجلت قلوبهم، وكان الحسين عليه السّلام وبعض من معه من خواصه تشرق ألوانهم، وتهدأ جوارحهم، وتسكن نفوسهم.

"When the situation became tense for Imām al-Husayn (as) those who were with him looked at him and saw that his state was contrary to theirs, for whenever the situation grew tense they changed color

1- Translation – trans. By Shams Inati, pg. ٨٩] al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt, pg. ٣٦٤]

and were shaken and experienced fear, whereas the faces of al-Husayn (as) and some of his companions shone, their bodily members were relaxed and their souls (were tranquil..."(1)

Such is the spirit which is ready to meet his Lord while both he is Pleased with his Beloved and the Beloved is pleased with him. The last verses of Sūratu'l Fajr, because of which the chapter was also known as Sūratu'l Husayn (as), also depicts the state of :Sayyid al-Shuhadā

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ. ارْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً. فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي. وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي .

O soul that art at rest! Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with him), well-pleasing" ((Him), So enter among My servants, And enter into My garden."(2)

There is a beautiful statement that Sayyid Haddād al-Mūsawī, a great mystic and contemporary of the late 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī, is reported to have said. His disciple, the late Ayatullāh Muhammad Husayn al-Tehrānī in his Rūh-e-Mujarrad quotes him :as saying

صحنه عاشوراء عالیترین مناظر عشقبازی است و زیباترین مواطن جمال و جلال الهی و نیکوترین اسماء رحمت و غضب و برای اهل بیت جز عبور از درجات و مراتب و وصول به اعلی ذروه حیات جاویـدان و منسـلخ شدن از مظاهر و تحقّق به اصل ظاهر و فنای مطلق در ذات احدیت چیزی نبوده است.

The scene of 'Āshurā is the sublimest expression of love and reveals the most" beautiful scenes of Divine Beauty and Glory, and the finest manifestations of the Names of Mercy and Wrath. For the Prophet's Household it was nothing more than a

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Ma'āni al-Akhbār, pg. ۲۸۸ -۱

Holy Qur'ān, ۸۹:۲۷-۳۰ -۲

transition across all the levels and degrees, to reach the highest peak of eternal life, coming off from the 'manifestations ' to realize the Manifesting Principle and to obtain ".absolute annihilation in the Being of the One

:(Āyatullāh Tehrānī adds saying(۱

تحقیقا روز شادی و مسرت اهل بیت است زیرا روز کامیابی و ظفر و قبولی وروررد در حریم خدا و حرم امن و امان او است. روز عبور از جزئیت و دخول در عالم کلیت است. روز پیروزی و نجاح است. روز وصول به مطلوب غائی و هدف اصلی است. روزی است که گوشه ای از آن را اگر به سالکان و عاشقان و شوریدگان راه خدا نشان دهند در تمام عمر از فرط شادی مدهوش می گردند و یکسره تا قیامت برپا شود به سجده شکر به رو در می افتند.

Truly it was the day of joy and delight for the Ahlu'l Bayt as it was a day of success " and victory, of reception into the Divine Sanctity and the sanctuary of peace and security. It was a day of rising above particularity and entry into the realm of universality. It was the day of triumph and deliverance, the day of the attainment of the ultimate end and the principal goal. It is such a day that if a fraction of it were shown to the wayfarers and ardent lovers of the path of God, they would swoon with extreme ecstasy until the end of their lives and fall on their faces to remain in prostration of gratitude until Judgment's

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Rūh-e-Mujarrad, pg. ۸۴ -۱

(Day…."(۱

In reality, as Āyatullāh Tehrāni later explains in his biographical account of his mentor, the event of Kerbalā' is like a double sided coin, one side of which is love, zeal, victory and the triumphant attainment of the Imām (as), and the other side is sorrow, grief torment, torture, and mourning. Āyatullāh Tehrānī believes that one can only see its other side (i.e. the side of 'ishq) after one has seen the sorrowful side and :transcended it. He says

:(Āyatullāh Tehrānī says(۲

أما سایر افراد مردم که در عالم کثرات گرفتارند و از نفس برون نیامده اند حتما باید گریه و عزاداری و سینه زنی و نوحه خوانی کنند تا بدین طریق بتوانند راه را طی کنند و بدان مقصد عالی نائل آیند...همچنانکه در روایات کثیره مستفیضه ما را امر به عزاداری نموده اند تا بدین وسیله جان خود را پاک کنیم و با آن سروران در طی این سبیل هم آهنگ گردیم

But those who are still captives within the realm of multiplicity and have not emerged" from the domain of the self, they should definitely engage in lamentation and mourning, in beating their breasts and reciting elegies so that thereby they may traverse the way and reach the high goal...Accordingly, in a large number of traditions we have been commanded to mourn, so that we may purify our souls by these means (and fall in step with those masters in traversing this way."(۳

All these radiant narratives demonstrate that the path is open for the faithful believers too. If one adopts the

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Spirit Immaterial, translated by Sayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī, Al-Tawhid Quareterly - ۱ Journal, v. ۱۲, no.۳, pp. ۴۲-۴۳

Rūh-e-Mujarrad, pg. ۹۱ -۲

Spirit Immaterial, translated by Sayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī, Al-Tawhid Quarterly Journal, -۳ v. ۱۲, no.۳, pp. ۵۲

path of Imām al-Husayn (as) and his sincere followers, he can reach the husnu'l hāl .that he or she eagerly asks from Almighty Allāh from this noble supplication

O Allāh, Facilitate the Payment of Our Debt

point

أَللَّهُمَّ اقْضِ عَنَّا الدَّيْنَ

O Allāh, Facilitate the Payment of Our Debt

We have already discussed extensively on the subject of debt in our commentary on the verse 'Allāhumma aqdi dayna kullī madīn' (O Allāh, facilitate the payment of the debt of every indebted one). It is possible that this verse speaks about the same subject, but is an emphasis and thus reveals the fundamental importance of relieving oneself from debt before departing this mortal world. In fact, if we look at several other supplications, we find that the following two requests have frequently come together: seeking relief from debt and enriching oneself (wa aghninā min al-faqr - .(which is to follow

:Following are some examples

١. In a supplication that the Holy Prophet (s) is narrated to have taught his beloved :daughter Fātimah □ for sustenance, we find the following

أَللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، مُنْزِلُ التَّوْرَاهِ وَالانْجِيلِ وَالزَّبُوْرِ وَالْفُرْقَان... إِقْضِ عَنِّىْ الدَّيْنَ وَأَغْنِنِى مِنَ الْفَقْرِ...

" Allāh is our Lord and the Lord of all things; He is the Revealer of Torah, Injīl, Zabūr (and Furqān...facilitate the payment of my debt and make me needless..."(١)

٢. :The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said to his noble companion Salmān

يَا سَلْمَان: أَكْثِرْ أَنْ تَقُوْلَ رَبِّىْ اقْضِ عَنِّىْ الدَّيْنَ وَاَغْنِنِىْ مِنَ الْفَقْرِ.

"(O Salmān frequently say: 'O Lord, pay for me my debt and make me needless.'"(٢)

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Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۲۹, pg. ۲۹۷ -۱

al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr, pg. ۲۳۳ -۲

:In the well-known supplication of ‘Alqamah we recite

... وَتَقْضِیَ عَنِّی دَیْنِی وَتُجِیرَنِی مِنَ الْفَقْرِ وَ...

(and pay for me my debt and save me from my poverty...”[1]...“

In a lengthy supplication recommended for the first day of the Holy month of .۴ :Ramadān we say

أَنْتَ الأَوَّلُ فَلَیْسَ قَبْلَکَ شَیْ ءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الآخِرُ فَلَیْسَ بَعْدَکَ شَیْ ءٌ، وَاَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ فَلَیْسَ دُونَکَ شَیْ ءٌ، فَصَلِّ عَلَی مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاقْضِ عَنِّی الدَّیْنَ وَأَغْنِنِی مِنَ الْفَقْرِ.

You are the First[2], and thus there is none before You, and You are the Last, and “ therefore there is none after You; and You are the Apparent, and therefore there is none other than You; so send Your Blessings on Muhammad and his progeny (as) and (facilitate the payment of my debt and make me needless.”[3]

The supplicant therefore, is humbly asking Almighty Allāh to make his situation such that after having paid his debts, he would never need to take another debt again. For he realizes how difficult it is to be suspended by debt, and thus would like to be free from its chains so that if death were to overtake him he would have nothing on his .shoulders

Another Aspect: Paying A Common Debt

Another probable meaning of this verse is that it speaks of a common debt that every human being shares. The phrase ‘iqdī ‘annā al-dayn...’ (اقض عنا الدين lit. pay for us the debt) can imply that all the human beings are in debt. This is when the article ‘al’ in al-Dayn is for ‘determination’ and thus refers to a particular debt. What kind of debt

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۱- Mafātīh al-Jinān, v. ۱, pg. ۴۵۹

۲- This supplication reveals the Pre-eternity Necessity of the Non-Composite Creator.

۳- al-Iqbāl al-A‘māl, v. ۱, pg. ۱۳۰

actually is this? There is well-known dictum (which some scholars narrate as a tradition(١)) that says:

أَللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهُ غَرِيْمٌ، لاَ يُقْضَى دَيْنُهُ.

"Allāh is a Creditor whose debt cannot be paid."

A rephrasal of this dictum is mentioned in the first sermon of Imām 'Alī (as) in Nahju'l Balāghah as follows:

...وَلاَ يُؤَدِّى حَقَّهُ الْمُجْتَهِدُوْنَ....

"...One Whose rights the diligent cannot fulfill..."(٢)

In simpler words: He is One Whose rights cannot be fulfilled even by those who struggle hard and are diligent. In his Minhāj al-Barā'ah- a commentary on the Nahju'l Balāghah - 'Allāmah Habībullāh al-Khu'ī expounds the above statement of Imām 'Alī (as) as follows:

وَالْمُرَادُ بِالْحَقِّ اللاّزِمِ هُوَ الْقِيَامُ عَلى شُكْرِ النَّعْمَاءِ، وَحَمْدِ الآلاَءِ، فَأَشَارَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ إلى أَنَّهُ لاَ يُمْكِنُ الْقِيَامُ بِوَظَايِفِ حَمْدِهِ، لأَنَّ الْحَمْدَ مِنْ جُمْلَةِ نِعَمِهِ، فَيَسْتَحِقُّ عَلَيْهِ حَمْدًا وَشُكْرًا، فَلاَ يَنْقَضِى مَا يَسْتَحِقُّهُ مِنَ الْمَحَامِدِ، لِعَدَمِ تَنَاهِى نِعَمِهِ، فَالأَوْلَى حِيْنَئِذٍ الإِعْتِرَافُ بِالْعَجْزِ وَالْقُصُوْرِ.

"The meaning of compulsory rights [as depicted in the dictum of Imām 'Alī (as) - 'One whose rights…'] is to thank God for His blessings and praise Him for His bestowals; therefore the Imām (as) alluded to the fact that it is impossible for one to bear the responsibility of praising Him, because 'to praise him' is in itself among His blessings, which then necessitates another praise and thanks; consequently, the praises that He deserves would never end, due to His endless blessings. Hence it is better to confess one's inability and shortcoming [in praising and thanking Him]…"(٣)

Almighty Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

وَ إِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ

This dictum is mentioned by ‘Allamah Tabātabā ‘ī in the introduction of al-Mīzān - ١ [See Tafsīr al-Mīzān, v. ١, pg. ٢٧]. In his anthology of questions (Dar Mahdare Ustād) that he had asked the grand ‘Allāmah during his life time, Hujjat al-Islām Rukhshād quotes this dictum as a hadīth and attributes the same to ‘Allāmah. The reference however has not been cited. Nevertheless, the dictum itself bears witness to its .veracious content

Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon ١ -٢

Minhāj al-Barā’ah fi Sharhi Nahj al-Balāghah, v. ١, pg. ٢۴٧ -٣

لَا تُحْصُوهَا .

(If you enumerate Allāh’s blessings, you will not be able to count them…”(١)…“

In his supplication when confessing his shortcomings in giving thanks, Imām al-Sajjād :(as) says

أَللُّهَمَّ إنَّ أَحَداً لا يَبْلُغُ مِنْ شُكْرِکَ غَايَةً إلا حَصَلَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ إحْسَانِکَ مَا يُلْزِمُهُ شُكْراً. وَلا يَبْلُغُ مَبْلَغاً مِنْ طَاعَتِکَ وَإنِ اجْتَهَدَ إلاّ كَانَ مُقَصِّرا دُونَ اسْتِحْقَاقِکَ بِفَضْلِکَ. فَأَشْكَرُ عِبَادِکَ عَاجِزٌ عَنْ شُكْرِکَ، وَأَعْبَدُهُمْ مُقَصِّرٌ عَنْ طَاعَتِکَ.

,O Allāh

no one reaches a limit in thanking You

without acquiring that of Your beneficence

,which enjoins upon him thanksgiving

,Nor does anyone reach a degree in obeying You

,even if he strives

without falling short of what You deserve

.because of Your bounty

The most thankful of Your servants

,has not the capacity to thank You

and the most worshipful of them

(falls short of obeying You.(٢

:Imām ‘Alī (as) is sermon ٥٢ of Nahja’l Balāghah says

وَاللّهِ لَو انْمَاثَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ انْمِيَاثاً–وَسَالَتْ عُيُونُكُمْ مِنْ رَغْبَةٍ إلَيْهِ أَوْ رَهْبَةٍ مِنْهُ دماً–ثُمَّ عُمِّرْتُمْ فِی الدُّنْيَا–مَا الدُّنْيَا بَاقِيَةٌ مَا جَزَتْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَلَوْ لَمْ تُبْقُوا شَيْئاً مِنْ جُهْدِكُمْ–أَنْعُمَهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعِظَامَ–وَهُدَاهُ إيَّاكُمْ إلَى الإِيْمَانِ.

By Allāh, if your hearts melt down thoroughly and your eyes shed tears of blood“ either in hope for Him or for fear from Him and you are also allowed to live in this world for all the time that it exists, even then your actions cannot pay for His great bounties over you and His having guided you towards faith.”(۳)

Thanking Allāh As He Deserves

But despite all this, Almighty Allāh has shown us a method of thanking Him. Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said:

أَوْحَى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَى مُوسَى (ع): يَا مُوسَى

۱- Holy Qur’ān, ۱۴:۳۴

۲ - al-Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah (The Psalms of Islām, English Translation by William Chittick), Supplication no. ۳۷, pp. ۱۲۳-۱۲۴

۳- Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon ۵۲, pg. ۷۲

اشْـكَرْنِی حَقَّ شُـكْرِی. فَقَالَ: يَا رَبِّ كَيْفَ أَشْـكَرُكَ حَقَّ شُكْرِكَ وَلَيْسَ مِنْ شُكْرٍ أَشْكَرُكَ بِهِ إِلاَّ وَأَنْتَ أَنْعَمْتَ بِهِ عَلَيَّ. فَقَالَ: يَا مُوسَى شَكَرْتَنِی حَقَّ شُكْرِی حِينَ عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنِّی.

Allāh, the Exalted, Revealed unto Mūsā (as): ‘O Mūsā, thank Me the way I deserve to“ be thanked. Mūsā (as) said: O Lord, how can I thank you the way You deserve to be thanked, while there is no gratitude that I express save that it in itself is a blessing that You have bestowed on me; Allāh said: O Mūsā, It is now that you have thanked (me the way I deserve to be thanked, knowing that that was from me.”(١)

Therefore understanding the fact that ‘every thanksgiving’ is in itself a blessing of Almighty Allāh on His servant is highly important. Rather those who have realized through Divine Revelation (Qur’ān), intellectual reasoning (burhān) or inner vision (‘irfān) that every element of their beings depend on the Almighty, whether in the level of their essence, attributes or actions, are in a better position of achieving this kind of thankfulness.The following verse of the Holy Qur’ān clearly says the every :being together with its action stands by the permission of Almighty Allāh

وَ اللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ .

(And Allāh has created you and whatever you do.”(٢“

Therefore whatever good we do, whether in form of thanks, praise, worship, etc. all belong to Almighty Allāh and are by His permission, succor (tawfīq), and assistance. Neither is our essence our property nor our

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١- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ١٣, pg. ٣٥١

٢- Holy Qur’ān, ٣٧:٩۶

actions of virtue. Therefore 'paying the common debt of Allāh' can never be conceived. Consequently, asking Allāh to pay our common debt is like asking Him to .accept our deeds of worship, praise and thanks

Thanking the Means of Grace – a Condition of Thanking Allāh

Although every advantage that we receive is principally from and by Allāh, there are secondary causes that Almighty Allāh Creates to allow things to happen. For example, He helps His poor servants through His benevolent rich ones. He feeds the human beings through the plants and animals and requires them to work and facilitate the conditions of preparing food so that they can consume it and maintain their health to worship and get closer to Him. Therefore it would be incorrect to discard the 'intermediary' of an advantage by saying that my monotheistic outlook dictates that al-shukr lillāh (thanks belong solely to Allāh). It is correct to say that thanks belong solely to Allāh, but the Almighty has taught the human being to show gratitude to one who does anything good to someone despite his limitation and utter dependence. :Observe the following narrations

:Imām al-Sādiq (as) is reported to have said .١

مِنْ حَقِّ الشُّكْرِ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تَشْكُرَ مَنْ أَجْرَى تِلْكَ النِّعْمَةَ عَلَى يَدِهِ.

An example of thanking Allāh the way He deserves to be thanked is when you thank" (one in whose hands He enabled the blessing to take place."(١

:Imām al-Ridā (as) is reported to have said .٢

مَنْ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ الْمُنْعِمَ مِنَ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

Whosoever does not thank the giver of the blessing from among"

Wasā'il al-Shī'ah, v. ١۶, pg. ٣١١ -١

the creatures, would not thank Allāh, the Invincible and Majestic.”(1)

(Allāh is the both the Shākir (one who thanks) and the Mashkur (one who is thanked

Having understood the monotheistic outlook that every action of ours entirely comes into being and subsists by Allāh, it is clear that both the shākir and the mashkūr is Allāh. Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī in his Sharh al-Asmā’ under the verse ‘...yā khayra Shākirin wa Mashkūr, yā khayra Hāmidin wa Mahmūd...’ says:

(يَا خَيْرَ ذَاكِرٍ وَمَذْكُوْرٍ، يَا خَيْرَ شَاكِرٍ وَمَشْكُوْرٍ، يَا خَيْرَ حَامِدٍ وَمَحْمُوْدٍ): قَدْ ذَكَرْنَا سَابقًا اَنَّهُ إذاَ قِيْلَ: (لَهُ الْحَمْدُ) لَا يُقْصَدُ اَنَّ الْمَحْمُوْدِيَّهَ فَقَطْ أَيْنَمَا وَقَعَتْ طُرّاً وَكُلاًّ لَهُ تَعَالى، بَلْ الْمَقْصُوْدُ اَنَّ الْحَامِدِيَّهَ أَيْضًا لَهُ وَبِهِ تَعَالى، فَالذّاَكِرِيّهُ وَالشَّاكِرِيَّهُ وَالْحَامِدِيَّهُ وَنَظَائِرُهَا لَهُ وَبِهِ تَعَالى. وَالْعِبَارَهُ الأَوْلى فِى بَعْضِ الْمَرَاتِبِ أَنْ يُقَالَ: اِنَّهُ بحَوْلِهِ وَقُوَّتِهِ تَعَالى.

“We mentioned earlier that if it is said ‘to Him belongs all praises’ it does not only mean that every praise wherever it may occur belongs to Allāh, but also means that ‘the agency of praise’ [wherever it may be] too belongs to Allāh and takes place by Him; hence thankfulness (shākiriyyah), remembrance (dhākiriyyah), praise (hāmidiyyah) and the like [all] belong to him and take place by Him, the Exalted. And a better expression about the same in a certain level is to say: that it [i.e. praise, thankfulness, etc.] transpires by His power and strength, the Exalted.”(2)

Imām Husayn (as) in his famous supplication of ‘Arafah alludes to the subtlely that even before we try to remember Him, He remembers us. He attracts us; He pulls us; He encourages us to thank and praise and

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۱- Ibid., v. ۱۶, pg. ۳۱۳

۲- Sharh al-Asmā’, pp. ۷۵۹-۷۶۰

remember Him. If we were to free ourselves from the spatial limitations, we can understand a subtler meaning to such precedence: Not only does He Remember us before we remember Him, but causally it is essential for Him to Remember us so that we Remember Him. Rather, our remembrance is entirely by Him. Imām Husayn (as) says:

...أَنْتَ الذَّاكِرُ قَبْلَ الذَّاكِرِينَ...

"...You are the Rememberer before the rememberers..."(١)

Allāh is Thanked according to the Limitation of the Thankful One

It should be noted that although the tradition on shukr that we mentioned earlier clearly states how one can thank Almighty Allāh appropriately, it makes a hint to the fact that thanking Him the way He deserves is beyond the limitation of the human being. None can ever claim that he has thanked Almighty Allāh for every blessing. Firstly, because every 'thanks' necessitates another thanks, since thanking him is a blessing in itself. And secondly, we cannot enumerate and count the blessings of Almighty Allāh. Imām al-Sajjād (as) in his prayer Munājāt al-Shākirīn mentions these two reasons as follows:

...فَآلاؤُكَ جَمَّةٌ ضَعُفَ لِسَانِي عَنْ إِحْصَائِهَا، وَنَعْمَاؤُكَ كَثِيرَةٌ قَصُرَ فَهْمِي عَنْ إِدْرَاكِهَا فَضْلاً عَنِ اسْتِقْصَائِهَا، فَكَيْفَ لِي بِتَحْصِيلِ الشُّكْرِ وَشُكْرِي إِيَّاكَ يَفْتَقِرُ إِلَى شُكْرٍ؟ فَكُلَّمَا قُلْتُ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ وَجَبَ عَلَيَّ لِذٰلِكَ أَنْ أَقُولَ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ.

"Your boons are abundant -

my tongue is too weak to count them!

Your favours are many -

my understanding falls short of grasping them,

not to speak of exhausting them!

So how can I achieve thanksgiving?

For my thanking You requires thanksgiving.

,’!Whenever I say, ‘To You belongs praise

,it becomes thereby incumbent upon me to say

)To You belongs praise’!”(۲‘

,Therefore

p: ۱۹۶

Du‘ā’ al-’Arafah, Mafātīh al-Jinān, v. ۱, pg. ۲۷۳ -۱

al-Sahīfah al-Sajjādiyyah (The Psalms of Islām, English Translation by William - ۲ Chittick), Supplication no. ۳۷, pp. ۲۴۳-۲۴۴

no one should ever think that he or she has the ability to thank Him the way He deserves. Yes, out of His overflowing Mercy, He accepts the thankfulness and praise of one who has realized that his thankfulness itself is from Allāh and that it deserves another thanking. But that should not be taken as the 'perfect' thanks of the 'abd (servant of Allāh). Rather it should be taken as 'the imperfect and incomplete thanks 'accepted by the All-Merciful. Furthermore the degrees of comprehending that every thanksgiving is a blessing and from Allāh are various. Whereas some have accepted this truth by following the Revelation, others have established its verity through intellectual reasoning. Another group however, due to the purification of their hearts, .(can literally behold this truth through presential knowledge (al-'ilm al-hudūrī

In another supplication Imām al-Sajjād (as) confesses that the dhikr (remembrance of Allāh, whether that be in the form of thanks (shukr), praise (hamd), etc.) of the supplicant is according to his imperfect state and not according to what Almighty Allāh :deserves. In his Munājāt al-Dhākirīn, Imām al-Sajjād (as) whispers

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ. إِلٰهِى لَوْلاَ الْوَاجِبُ مِنْ قَبُولِ أَمْرِكَ لَنَزَّهْتُكَ مِنْ [عَنْ] ذِكْرِى إِيَّاكَ، عَلَى أَنَّ ذِكْرِى لَكَ بِقَدْرِى لا بِقَدْرِكَ...

,My God"

,were it not incumbent to accept Your command

,I would declare You far too exalted for me to remember You

,for I remember You in my measure

(not in Your measure..."(١

Worship – A Form of Thanking Almighty Allāh

Those who have realized the utter dependence of the human being and the absolute affluence of Almighty Allāh would

١- Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah, pg. ٢٥٥

never deem whatever they do as perfect. Consequently, they would not worship Almighty Allāh in transaction for Paradise. They would worship Him because He deserves to be worshipped. Their worship would be a worship of thankfulness or love. :Imām ‘Alī (as) is reported to have said

اِنَّ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ رَغْبَةً فَتِلْکَ عِبَادَةُ التُّجّارِ، وَاِنَّ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ رَهْبَةً فَتِلْکَ عِبادَةُ الْعَبِيْدِ، وَاِنَّ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ شُكْرًا فَتِلْکَ عِبَادَةُ الاَحْرَارِ.

Surely a people worshipped Allāh in anticipation [of reward]; this is the worship of“ traders; and a people worshipped Allāh out of fear [of Hell]; this is the worship of bondsman; and another group of people worshipped Allāh out of thankfulness, this is (the worship of the liberated and free ones (ahrār).”(١)

Readers can appreciate the fundamental reason why some worship Allāh as a transaction. It is due to their ignorance of the relation between the human being and Allāh. They feel they can offer something independent from themselves. They do not :realize that every perfect action entirely stands by Allāh

وَمَا بِكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّهِ .

(Whatever blessing you have is from God...(٢)

It should however not be misunderstood and thought that every evil deed also stems from Almighty Allāh. Indeed it is through the support of Almighty that every deed regardless of its nature is done. The human beings however have a volition and can choose what to do. The human conscience is a proof to this contention. When they resolve to do bad, Almighty Allāh out of His Wisdom does not intercept their

Nahj al-Balāghah, wisdom no. ٢٣٧ -١

Holy Qur’ān, ١۶:۵٣ -٢

way. Rather every movement they make is entirely by His support. Trial and tribulation, and obedience and disobedience would carry no meaning if every one was forced to do what Almighty Allāh wants. Therefore good and bad is by His support but .not forced by Him on man

It should also be realized that 'to do bad' stems from imperfection on the part of the human being. And imperfection is the non-existence of a perfection, which does not require any cause. Therefore attributing the non-existence of a perfection to Almighty Allāh is evidently absurd. For example, the stingy behavior of a certain person reveals deficiency on his part. The person lacks the 'broadness of heart' and the trait of 'open-handedness (jūd).' We cannot say that Almighty Allāh creates his stinginess. This is because stinginess (bukhl) is not a trait to be created. It is the absence of a trait. But when the person is openhanded and benevolent, the trait of benevolence which is an existential trait (sifah wujūdiyyah) needs a cause. And it is only by Almighty Allāh that this trait can exist and subsist. Therefore we can say that benevolence is from and by Allāh, but we cannot say that stinginess is from and by Allāh. Yes, the actions that stem from a stingy heart, need the support and strength of Allāh. However, since Almighty Allāh has given every one a free will, he himself chooses the action and Allāh (swt) enables him to carry out the same. But that

should not lead us to imagine that Allāh has forced him to do the action.

The Holy Prophet’s (s) Worship

Several traditions narrate that the Holy Prophet (s) would worship Almighty Allāh so much that his feet would get swollen. He was once asked by one of his wives: ‘Why do you distress yourself when Almighty Allāh has forgiven all your past and future sins?’ and he replied: ‘should I not be a thankful servant of Allāh?’(١)

Despite all this, he (s) is reported to have said:

مَا عَبَدْناکَ حَقَّ عِبَادَتِکَ...

“...We have not worshiped you the way You deserve to be worshipped”

The angels of Allāh (swt) likewise, despite their utter purity and perpetual worship, declare their shortcoming in worshipping Almighty Allāh the way He deserves to be worshipped. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said to Abū Dharr:

يَا أَبَا ذرّ! إنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَلائکَهٌ قِيَامًا مِنْ خِيْفَهِ اللّٰهِ، مَا رَفَعُوْا رُؤُوسَهُمْ حَتَّى يُنْفَخُ فِى الصُّوْرِ النَّفْخَهُ الآخِرَه، فَيَقُوْلُوْنَ جَمِيْعًا: سُبْحَانَکَ رَبَّنا وَبحَمْدِکَ، مَا عَبَدْنَاکَ کَمَا يَنْبَغِى لَکَ أَنْ تُعْبَدُ.

“O Abū Dharr, surely Allāh has angels who stand in fear of Him; they would not raise their heads until the final blow of the trumpet; thereupon all of them would say: Free from imperfection are You, Our Lord, and we praise You; we did not worship You the way You should be worshipped.”(٢)

And Imām al-Sajjād (as) alluding to this in one of his supplications quotes the angels of Allāh saying:

سُبْحانَکَ ما عَبَدْناکَ حَقَّ عِبادَتِکَ.

“ Free from imperfection are You! We have not worshipped You the way You deserve to

۱- Bihār al-Anwār, v. ۱۶, pg. ۲۶۴

۲- Makārim al-Akhlāq, v. ۱, pg. ۴۶۴

(be worshipped.”(1)

Hence one should never rely on any of his deeds of virtue. Obviously this does not mean that he should despair and think that his deeds have no value. One should instead totally rely on the Grace of the All-Merciful and continue in his struggle of perfection.

A Noteworthy Incident

The night before he left for the hospital where he was to pass the last moments of his life, the late Āyatullāh Khumaynī was in the company of Mrs. Fātimah Tabātabā’ī, his daughter-in-law among other relatives. The latter narrates the following conversation, which took place after Āyatullāh Khumaynī had eaten very little of his dinner:

Āyatullāh Khumaynī: Now I have one or two advices for you: I shall not return. However, I don’t want you to express grief and anxiety on my demise. I am asking God to give you patience. Be careful not to weep and lament. This is what I had to say.”

Fātimah Tabātabā’ī: I and Khānum (the wife of Āyatullāh Khumaynī) were present; I do not recollect exactly; I think Zahrā Khānum Ishrāqī was (also) present. I don’t know whether someone else was present or not. It was difficult for us to listen to this issue; all of us had turned sad.

Khānum said: No, Āghā, God Willing, you will recover...

Āyatullāh Khumaynī: No, I will not return. However, let me tell you this: to go [to the next world] is very difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult.’

Fātima Tabātabā’ī said: ‘Āghā, If you say all this, then we shall

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1- al-Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah, supg. no.۳

greatly lose our hopes. This is because, as far as I know, although I am young, those who have been with you narrate that not only have you performed all the obligatory deeds, and abstained from the forbidden ones, you have also observed the recommended acts and even abstained from most of the unpleasant deeds (makrūhāt). If it is really difficult for you also, then what should we say? We get greatly despondent.

Āyatullāh Khumaynī: 'No, you must not despair from God's Mercy(۱); this itself is the greatest sin...(۲) However, bear this in mind that to go [to the next world] is very difficult; I do not have any [good] deed, so that I should want to be happy thereby.'

Fātimah Tabātabā'ī: But Āghā, these words that you utter are very difficult for us to bear, for if it is as such, we are extremely frightened, worried and upset.'

Āyatullāh Khumaynī: 'It is really as such. If Hadrat Sajjād (as) wept and said: "O Lord it is likely that my good deeds are bad"(۳), do I possess a deed to get happy and confident thereby? I only have hope of God's Grace(۴) and have no [action] at my credit to be hopeful...; and to go [to the next world] is very difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult.

(The doctors then came, and Imām [Khumaynī] said: 'It is time to leave.'(۵)

A Supplication to the Only Beloved

O Allāh, all of us have debts to pay. Some pertain to the material world and others concern the immaterial realm.

۱- The Holy Qur'ān [۳۹:۵۴] says: Say: O My servants who have been extravagant against yourselves, do not despair of Allāh's Mercy; surely Allāh forgives sins altogether. Surely, He is the All-forgiving, the All-compassionate. The Holy Qur'ān [۱۵:۵۶] also says: He said, 'And who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord, excepting those that are astray?'

۲- Imām 'Alī □ is reported to have once told a person, whom fear had made to despair,

due to the ampleness of his sins: ‘O you! Your despondency of Allāh’s Mercy is worse [than your sins.’ [Jāmi’ al-Sa’ādāt, vol. ١, pg. ٢۴٧

This also refers to what Imam al-Husayn says in his famous supplication of - ٣ ‘Arafah. He says: ‘O God, one whose good deeds are bad, how can his bad deeds not .[be bad?’ [Mafatīh al-Jinān, Du‘ā al-’Arafah by Imām al-Husayn

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said: ‘Know that no one of you will be saved -۴ by his action, including me; except if Allāh’s Mercy and Grace were to cover me.’ ((Mīzān al-Hikmah, new ed., vol. ٣, pg. ٢١٣١

Fasl-e Sabr - Memoirs of the days of Imām’s illness and demise by the team of - ۵ .physicians and those affiliated to Āyatullāh Khumaynī, pp. ٨٣-٨۴

You Have taught us how important it is to ensure that our debts are paid before we enter Your sanctuary of love. Therefore enable us to pay our debts. You very well know that the common debt that all of us have to pay can never be paid unless You forgive us and accept our few deeds of virtue, if any. O Allāh, we have no hope in our actions however much we have struggled; our hope is on Your Enveloping Mercy. Therefore deprive us not from the same. Our hope (rajā'), which again is entirely by Your Grace, is our capital asset (ra'sumāl). Enable us to maintain it so that it can facilitate the Divine spark to glow in our spirits and always inspire us to come closer to You.

It is indeed interesting to note the extent of hope in our infallible Imāms (as), who enjoyed very exalted stations: Imām 'Alī (as) whispers in his Sha'bān whisperings (Munājāt al-Sha'abāniyyah):

إِنْ أَدْخَلْتَنِی النَّارَ أَعْلَمْتُ أَهْلَهَا أَنِّی أُحِبُّکَ .

"If you place me in the Hell Fire I will inform its inhabitants that I love You..."(۱)

And in his well-known Du'ā al-Kumayl he cries:

أَمْ كَيْفَ أَسْكُنُ فِي النَّارِ وَرَجَائِی عَفْوُکَ؟ فَبِعِزَّتِکَ يَا سَيِّدِی وَمَوْلاَیَ أُقْسِمُ صَادِقاً، لَئِنْ تَرَكْتَنِی نَاطِقاً، لَأَضِجَّنَّ إِلَيْکَ بَيْنَ أَهْلِهَا ضَجِيجَ الآمِلِينَ...وَلأَبْكِيَنَّ عَلَيْکَ بُكَاءَ الْفَاقِدِينَ ...

"How can I stay in the Hell Fire when I am hopeful of Your forgiveness; for by Your Invincibility, O my Leader and my Master- I swear truthfully, if you do allow me to speak; I would surely

۱- Mafātīh al-Jinān, v. ۱, pg. ۱۵۸

cry to You among its inhabitants, the cry of the hopeful… and I would most surely lament for You the lamentation of those who are separate from their dear ones…”(۱)

And Make us Needless

point

وَأَغْنِنَا مِنَ الْفَقْرِ

In the verses “Allāhumma aghnī kulla faqīr”(۲) and “Allāhumma sudda faqranā bighināk” we spoke about poverty at length. The apparent import of the above verse seems to be an emphasis on the previous verses. Besides, the context of this verse bears a witness to that too. Nevertheless, in order to summarize the main kinds of poverty, I have chosen to discuss the verse from another angle.It should also be noted that this particular supplication reveals the states of the Prophet (s) in his supplication. And appreciating the remoteness of this servant from the lofty station of the supplicant, it would not be easy to accurately define the motive of these verses. Therefore we would suffice ourselves in this chapter with an infinitesimal drop of the ocean.

Considering the article “اَلْ al” that accompanies al-faqr, the word al-faqr can have different meanings. One of these is to denote a specific kind of faqr (poverty).

Briefly, after having gone through the Holy Qur’ān, authentic traditions, and words of wisdom of authorities in philosophy and Islamic theology, we conclude:

There are two general kinds of poverty:

۱. al-faqr al-mamdūh (the recommended poverty).

۲. al-faqr al-madhmūm (the abominable poverty).

The Recommended Poverty

Any kind of poverty that is an advantage either for the path or the goal of human perfection comes under the category of recommended poverty. Some of Almighty

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Ibid.,v. ۱, pg. ۶۵ -۱

Manifestations of the All-Merciful, v. ۱, pp. ۱۶-۲۶ -۲

Allāh's servants have been deliberately made to suffer the problems of poverty so that they can attain perfection after they bear the difficult situations with patience and thankfulness. Almighty Allāh knows the state of every servant of His, and thus provides according to His Plan.

Realization Of Absolute Poverty

The poverty that is achieved at the end of the journey to Allāh is highly praised in our traditions. It is the state of being utterly poor to Allāh. Some authorities, in order to be more accurate, say that we are not poor (faqīr) in this sense, but rather 'poverty itself' ('ayn al-faqr). This is because we do not have any independent essence that is needy. In other words, it is incorrect to say that we are independent beings who are needy. No one has any share of independence whatsoever. Our beings that we conjecture to be independent entirely exist and subsist by the permission of Allāh. Therefore our beings are not poor, but poverty itself. In terms of philosophy, there are no three entities when it comes to causing a creation. We do not have the Conferrer of grace (mufīd) and the object of grace (mufād 'alayh) and the grace itself (fayd). Rather, we only have the Conferrer of Grace and His Grace- which we, due to our limited comprehension or remoteness from the Beloved, consider as an independent entity. Therefore the 'creation' or 'creatures' are grace (fayd) itself.(١)

Āyatullāh Khumaynī in his Chehel Hadīth (۴٠ Traditions), alluding to the reality that the dependent existents are

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١- And getting deeper we come to realize that in reality we only have One Being and His Actions, which form His Creation and manifest His Most Beautiful Names

:sheer poverty, says

...و هیچ موجودی را از خود استقلالی نیست و صرف تعلق و ربط و عین فقر و تدلّی به ذات مقدس حقّ علی الاطلاق است...

No being has any independence of its own and everything is sheer dependence,... (relation, poverty, and attachment to the sacred being of the Absolute Real...(۱

Although such poverty always exists in every being, only one who “realizes the same” through the vision of the heart, after self-purification, can be qualified to be known as poor in this sense. In his commentary on the Du‘ā’ al-Sabāh, Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī :says

وَالْفَقِيْرُ الْحَقِيْقِی مَنْ لَا يَمْلِكُ فِعْلاً وَلاَ صِفَةً وَلاَ وُجُوْداً وَيَشْهَدُ أَنَّ الْمُلْكَ لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهّارِ...

And the really poor one is he who does not own any action, attribute, or existence,“ (and witnesses that the kingdom is solely Allāh’s, the All-Paramount.”(۲

:The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) is reported to have said

الفَقْرُ فَخْرِیْ وَبِهِ أَفْتَخِرُ.

(The poverty is my pride and I am proud of it.”(۳“

:Imām al-Sajjād (as) in his supplication of seeking asylum with Allāh says

يَا غَنِيَّ الأَغْنِياءِ: ها نَحْنُ عِبادُكَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ، وَاِنّا افْقَرُ الْفُقَراء إِلَيْكَ.

O the Affluent of the affluent ones, here we are, your slaves, before You... and we“ (are the neediest of the needy toward You...”(۴

Therefore this kind of poverty is highly recommended and thus we do not seek emancipation from it in this verse. Rather, we eagerly ask for it and although it is known as ‘poverty’, no affluence and self-sufficiency can be compared to it. In other ,words, although near Allāh, the All-Affluent

۱- Forty Traditions, pg. ۵۷۸

۲- Sharh Duʿā al-Sabāh, pg. ۱۳۷

۳- ʿUddat al-Dāʾī wa Najāh al-Sāʾī, v. ۱, pg. ۱۲۳

۴- al-Sahīfah al-Sajjādiyyah, Supg. ۱۰, pg. ۴۱

this state is absolute poverty, it is the state of being ‘All-affluent by Allāh’s permission’.

There is a beautiful allusion in the well-known Du‘ā’ Jawshan al-Kabīr about this. We pray:

يَا غِنَائِی عِنْدَ افْتِقَارِی!

“O my Affluence in my poverty…”(1)

The Holy Prophet (s) is also reported to have prayed:

أَللُّهُمَّ أَغْنِنِی بِالإِفْتِقَارِ إِلَیْکَ، وَلاَ تُفْقِرْنِی بالإِسْتِغْنَاءِ عَنْکَ.

“O Allāh: Make me needless by becoming needy of You, and do not make me poor by being needless of You.”(2)

The Abominable Poverty

This is the poverty from which we direly seek release. If poverty obstructs us from availing ourselves of the basic necessities of life, that can enable us attain nearness to God, it is indeed something that we detest. If poverty makes us forget the Hereafter instead of making us alert about the Creator, then it is something that we should seek refuge from. Any poverty that separates us from the path or the goal is abominable. It is from such poverty that we should seek emancipation. Following are allusions to such kinds of poverty:

1. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said to Imām ‘Alī (as):

يَا عَلِيُّ: لاَ فَقْرَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْجَهْلِ.

“…O ‘Alī, there is no poverty more severe than ignorance…”(3)

2. Safwān bin Mihrān al-Jammāl is reported to have narrated from Imām al-Sādiq (as) that he said:

...لاَ فَقْرَ أَحَطُّ مِنَ الْحُمْقِ...

"...There is no poverty more degenerate than silliness (humq)..."(4)

One reason for this may be that 'silliness' deprives one from both material as well as spiritual progress.

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

أَفْقَرُ النَّاسِ الطَّمَّاعُ.

"The

1- Mafātīh al-Jinān, v. 1, pg. 88

2- Bihār al-Anwār, v. 96, pg. 31

3- al-Kāfī, v. 1, pg. 25

4- Ibid., v. 1, pg. 29

(poorest among the people is the greediest."(1)

This is because such a person is never satisfied, and instead of employing the means of livelihood for the main aim behind his creation he engages in the world and forgets the Hereafter. It is from such an attitude that we always seek refuge after our zuhr prayers when we say:

أَللُّهُمَّ إِنِّى أَعُوذُ بِکَ مِنْ نَفْسٍ لا تَشْبَعُ.

"O Allāh, I seek refuge with You from the soul that does not get satisfied."(2)

4. Imām 'Alī (as) is reported to have said:

رُبَّ غَنِيٍّ أَفْقَرُ مِنْ فَقِيرٍ.

"Many a time there is a rich person who is poorer than a poor person."(3)

5. Emphasizing the poverty that is really abominable, The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

أَلفَقْرُ فَقْر الْقَلْبِ.

"Poverty is the poverty of the heart."

The Holy Qur'ān also alludes to this fact when it describes the Judgment Day as:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ. إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ .

"...the day when neither wealth nor children will avail, except him who comes to God with a sound heart."(4)

Hence those who are spiritually affluent are really rich, for they cannot separate from their noble traits and pure heart, and thus would come with real provisions in the Hereafter.

A Word On Material Poverty

We cannot ignore the great disadvantage of material poverty, however, for every

human being would like to live a life independent of other than Allāh. At times, as we understood in the earlier verses of the supplication, it is the human being himself who creates impediments for his sustenance

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Mustadrak al-Wasā'il, v. ۱۲, pg. ۶۸ -۱

Mafātīh al-Jinān, v. ۱, pg. ۱۷ -۲

Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim, pg. ۳۷۰ -۳

Holy Qur'ān, ۲۶:۸۸-۸۹ -۴

and thus is deprived of it. Sometimes however, Almighty Allāh, out of His Abundant Mercy limits the sustenance of His servant only to test and elevate him more. In such a situation, one cannot blame the poor believer for his misdeeds. Following are some :traditions that shed light on this issue

:Imām Abū al-Hasan al-Kāzim (as) is reported to have said .١

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَقُولُ: إِنِّى لَمْ أُغْنِ الْغَنِيَّ لِكَرَامَةٍ بِهِ عَلَيَّ، وَلَمْ أُفْقِرِ الْفَقِيرَ لِهَوَانٍ بِهِ عَلَيَّ، وَهُوَ مِمَّا ابْتَلَيْتُ بِهِ الأَغْنِيَاءَ بِالْفُقَرَاءِ، وَلَوْلا الْفُقَرَاءُ لَمْ يَسْتَوْجِبِ الأَغْنِيَاءُ الْجَنَّةَ.

Indeed, Allāh (the invincible and exalted) says: Indeed I did not enrich the affluent" one due to a nobility in him, nor did I make the poor needy due to his insignificance; [Rather] I tried the affluent ones with the destitute; and were there no poor people, (the rich ones would not deserve Paradise."(١

In his noble ascent to the heavens (al-mi'rāj), it is reported that Almighty Allāh . ٢ :addressing the Prophet (s) at one point said

...وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لاَ يُصْلِحُهُ إِلاَّ الْغِنَى، وَلَوْ صَرَفْتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ لَهَلَكَ، وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لاَ يُصْلِحُهُ إِلاّ الْفَقْرُ، وَلَوْ صَرَفْتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ لَهَلَكَ...

Indeed among My believing servants there are believers whom nothing save" affluence (al-ghinā) can reform, and were I to change their state to other than that, they would perish; and indeed from among my believing servants there are those whom nothing save poverty can reform, and were I to change their state to other than that they

al-Kāfī, v. ٢, pg. ٢٦٥ -١

".would perish

Judging Ourselves

In order to determine which boat we are sailing in and to which category among the two kinds of poverty we belong, it is important for us to have a yardstick for distinction. How can we determine whether we suffer from the abominable poverty or the recommended one? There is a tradition narrated from Imām 'Alī (as) as follows:

لِلّهِ تَعالى فِيْ خَلْقِهِ مَثُوْبَاتُ فَقْرٍ وَعُقُوْبَاتُ فَقْرٍ، فَمِنْ عَلاَمَهِ الْفَقْرِ إذا كانَ مَثُوْبَةً أَنْ يَحْسُنَ عَلَيْهِ خُلُقُهُ، وَيُطِيْعَ رَبَّهُ، وَلاَ يَشْكُو حَالَهُ، وَيَشْكُرَ اللّهَ تَعالى عَلى فَقْرِهِ. وَمِنْ عَلاَمَهِ الْفَقْرِ إذا كانَ عُقُوْبَةً أَنْ يَسُوْءَ عَلَيْهِ خُلُقُهُ، وَيَعْصِى فيْهِ رَبَّهُ، وَيُكْثِرَ الشِّكَايَهَ، وَيتسخّط القَضَاء، وَهَذَا النَّوْعُ مِنَ الْفَقْرِ هُوَ الَّذِىْ اسْتَعَاذَ مِنْهُ النَّبىّ صَلّى اللّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآله.

"Allāh, the Exalted, has rewards and punishments of poverty in his creation. Among the signs of poverty when it is a reward is when one has a beautiful character, obeys His Lord, does not complain about his poor state, and thanks Allāh for his poverty; and among the signs of poverty when it is a punishment is when one is of unpleasant character, is disobedient of his Lord, frequently complains about his situation, and is not happy with what Allāh has ordained for him. And this is the kind of the poverty that the Holy Prophet (s) sought refuge from."(١)

The Blessed State Of Ridhā

Although we have many traditions indicating how the pious believers would undergo poverty and face difficulties in life, one should not consider 'the state of poverty' always as a distinction for them. The criteria to

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١- Riyād al-Sālikīn, v. ٢, pg. ٣٩٠

judge what is good for whom, is Allāh’s decision and choice. Therefore, even if one was able to bear the difficulties of poverty, he should not consider it always :recommended for him. Consider the following tradition

وَقَدْ وَرَدَ: أَنَّ الإِمَامَ مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ أَلْبَاقِرَ (ع) قَالَ لِجَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الأَنْصارِى - وَقَدْ إِكْتَنَفَتْهُ عِلَلٌ وَأَسْقَامٌ وَغَلَبَهُ ضَعْفُ الْهَرَمِ: كَيْفَ تَجِدُ حالَكَ؟ قَالَ: أَنَا فِى حَالٍ أَلْفَقْرُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنَ الْغِنى، وَالْمَرَضُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنَ الصِّحَّهِ، وَالْمَوْتُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنَ الْحَيَاهِ. فَقَالَ الإِمَامُ (ع) : أَمَّا نَحْنُ أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ، فَمَا يَرِدُ عَلَينَا مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنَ الفَقْرِ وَالغِنى وَالْمَرَضِ وَالصِّحَّهِ وَالْمَوْتِ وَالحَياهِ، فَهُوَ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْنَا. فَقَامَ جَابِرٌ وَقَبَّلَ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ، وَقَالَ: صَدَقَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) حَيْثُ قَالَ لِى: يَا جَابِرُ: سَتُدْرِكُ وَاحداً مِنْ أَوْلَادِى اسْمُهُ اسْمِى، يَبقُرُ العُلومَ بَقراً.

Once Imām al-Bāqir (as) is reported to have asked Jābir bin ‘Abdillāh al-Ansārī while“ the latter was not well and the weakness of old age had overtaken him: ‘How do you find your state?’ Jābir said: ‘Poverty is more lovable to me than affluence, illness is more lovable to me than well-being, and death is more lovable to me than life.’ Thereupon Imām al-Bāqir (as) said: ‘As for us, the Ahlu’l Bayt (as), however, we love whatever comes to us from Allāh, whether poverty, affluence, sickness, well-being, death or life.’ Jābir thereupon stood and kissed the Imām (as) between the two eyes and said: ‘The Messenger of Allāh said the truth when he said to me: ‘O Jābir, you will soon meet one of

my offsprings, his name is my name, he would split the knowledge a thorough (splitting.’”"(١)

?So Many Shi’as

There are numerous traditions that outline the criteria for identifying a true follower of the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible household. Due to the limited scope of this work, all this cannot be analyzed here. However, due to the relevance of the subject, we would like to quote one such tradition that clearly reveals what kind of relation a true Shī‘ah has with regard to his believing brethren. Al-Kāfī narrates(٢) a tradition :from Abū Ismā’īl who is reported to have said

وعَنْ أَبِی إِسْمَاعِیلَ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لأَبِی جَعْفَرٍ (ع): جُعِلْتُ فِدَاکَ! إِنَّ الشِّیعَهَ عِنْدَنَا کَثِیرٌ. فَقَالَ: فَهَلْ یَعْطِفُ الْغَنِیُّ عَلَی الْفَقِیرِ؟ وَ هَلْ یَتَجَاوَزُ الْمُحْسِنُ عَنِ الْمُسِی ءِ وَیَتَوَاسَوْنَ؟ فَقُلْتُ: لاَ. فَقَالَ: لَیسَ هَؤُلاءِ شِیعَهً. الشِّیعَهُ مَنْ یَفْعَلُ هَذَا.

I said to Abū Ja’far (as): may I be made your ransom; surely there are many Shī‘ahs“ among us. He said: ‘And do the rich among them have a soft heart for the poor, and the good-doer forgive the faults of the evil doer, and do they have concern for one another? I said: No. Thereupon he (as) said: These are not our Shī‘ahs; our Shi’ahs are ”.those who do all that

Surely You Are All-Powerful Over Everything

point

إِنَّکَ عَلَی کُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٍ

Al-Qadīr is one of the most beautiful names (al-Asmā’ al-Husnā) of Almighty Allāh. :Theologians (mutakallimūn) define it as

...هُوَ الْفَاعِلُ لِمَا یَشَآءُ عَلی قَدْرِ مَا تَقْتَضِی الْحِکْمَهُ لاَ زَائِداً عَلَیهِ وَلا نَاقِصاً عَنْهُ...

One who does whatever He wants according to Wisdom, nothing more...“

Jāmi' al-Sa'ādāt, v. ٢, pg. ٢١ -١

al-Kāfī, v. ٢, pg. ١٧٣ -٢

(or less than that..."(١)

denotes permanence. فعيـل And the form (wazn) of the word "Qadīr" which is fa'īl .Therefore, He is permanently Able and Powerful

Not only is He Powerful, but he is the Powerful, such that none other than He has any kind of independent power. If any power is found with anyone it is by the permission of Allāh. No one can claim to have a power 'other than His Power.' Every conceivable power exists and subsists by His Power. The following dictum, which appears in a :number of supplications, refers to this very subtle issue

لاَ حَوْلَ وَلاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِاللَّهِ.

(There is no strength or power save by Allāh."(٢"

:The Holy Qur'ān, emphasizing the fact that every kind of power belongs to Allāh, says

وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ .

though the wrongdoers will see, when they sight the punishment, that power,..." (altogether, belongs to God, and that God is severe in punishment..."(٣

Realizing this, we conclude that only He can fulfill all our aforementioned requests. It is therefore important to seek His assistance solely. In saying 'Innaka 'alā kulli shay'in Qadīr' we mean 'since You are All-Powerful, we ask all the aforementioned needs '.from You

If we ponder over the Holy Qur'ān we find that many of the verses are concluded with Names of Almighty Allāh. Exegetes say that in order to understand such verses properly, we should try to reflect on these Divine Names, for they form the reason .behind the verses

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This should not be mistaken to mean that He is unable to do what is not according -١ .to His Wisdom. Rather whatever He does is always wise

It is reported in al-Kāfī that Imām al-Bāqir ould recite the following whenever he -٢ left his house: Bismillāhi kharajtu wa ‘ala Allāhī tawakkaltu lā hawlā wa lā quwwata illā billāh [In the Name of Allāh I leave and on Allāh do I trust, and there is no strength or .[power save by Allāh [al-Kāfī, v. ٢, pg. ٥۴٣

Holy Qur’ān, ٢:١۶۵ -٣

:For example in verse ۱ of chapter al-Fātir we read

أَلْحَمْـدُ لِلَّهِ فَـــاطِرِ السَّمٰوَاتِ وَالأَـرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَهِ رُسُـلًا أُولِى أَجْنِحَهٍ مَثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ يَزِيـدُ فِى الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ .

All praise belongs to God, originator of the heavens and the earth, maker of the“ Angels [His] messengers, possessing wings, two, three or four [of them]. He adds to)the creation whatever He wishes. Indeed God has power over all things.”(۱

:Commenting on the last clause of this verse, ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī says

وَقَوْلُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ تَعْلِيلٌ لِجَمِيعِ مَا تَقَدَّمَهُ اَوِ الْجُمْلَهِ الأَخِيرَهِ وَالأَوَّلُ أَظْهَرُ.

The clause ‘Indeed God has power over all things’ of the verse is a reason for all the“ aforementioned [i.e. originating the Heavens and the earth, making the angels...etc.] or a reason for the last clause [i.e. He adds to the creation whatever He wishes]. But)the former is more apparent [i.e. it is a reason for all the aforementioned].”(۲

Likewise is the case with many of our supplications(۳), including the supplication under discussion. If we look at the supplication as a whole, we would realize that the last :verse is the reason behind all the aforementioned verses. In other words

- ;Since only Allāh is the All-Powerful, only He Can do whatever He Wants
- .Therefore we seek all the aforementioned requests from Him

In the previous verses we came to realize that God has a universal law: to get things done by their causes. Hence we should also seek the causes

p: ۲۱۴

۱- Ibid., ۳۵:۱

۲- al-Mīzān, v. ۱۷, pg. ۷

۳- Refer to the supplications of Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah and you will notice that Imām al-Sajjād (‘a) concludes a number of his supplications with the Sublime Names of (.Almighty Allāh. (Author

of what we aspire. However, we emphasized that the Principal Cause is Almighty Allāh alone. Therefore we should not look at the agent of grace as an independent provider. The only Independent Provider is Allāh. To Him Alone belongs everything in all the stages of its existence and subsistence. Therefore, to rely on the causes stems from .ignorance and is a manifestation of practical polytheism

?Was it was not for him I would have perished

There is an ignorant tendency among some people when it comes to appreciating the help they receive from their friends. A well-wisher may support a person and his family, and thereby emancipate him from many obstacles in life. Then, having attained the state of affluence, the person would say I thank Allāh first and then so and so, for had it not been for his assistance I would not have reached where I am. Such kind of thinking in our traditions is termed as practical polytheism. This is because the helper is just an intermediary of grace (wāsitah) and has no independence whatsoever, and thus cannot be taken as a second independent .helper

The great saint Ibn Fahd al-Hillī in his well-known prayer manual 'Uddat al-Dā'ī :narrates the following tradition

عَنْ أَبِی عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ (ص) فِیْ قَوْلِ اللّٰهِ تَعَالی: وَما یُؤْمِنُ أَکْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ إِلاّ وَهُمْ مُشْرِکُونَ ، قَالَ: هُوَ قَوْلُ الرَّجُلِ: لَوْ لاَ فُلاَنٌ لَهَلَکْتُ، وَلَوْلاَ فُلاَنٌ لَمَا أَصِبْتُ کَذاَ وَکَذَا، وَلَوْلاَ فُلاَنٌ لَضَاعَ عیَالِی. أَلاَ تَرَی أَنَّهُ قَدْ جَعَلَ لِلّٰهِ شَرِیْکًا فِیْ مُلْکِهِ یَرْزُقُهُ وَیَدْفَعُ عَنْهُ؟ قُلْتُ: فَیَقُوْلُ لَوْلاَ أَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَنَّ عَلَیَّ بِفُلاَنٍ لَهَلَکْتُ؟ قَالَ:

نَعَمْ، لَا بَأْسَ بِهٰذَا وَنَحْوِهِ.

Imām Abū 'Abdillāh (al-Sādiq (as)) is reported to have said about the verse: "And most of them do not believe in Allāh without associating others (with Him) (۱۲:۱۰۶)' that it refers to when a man says: 'Was it not for so and so, I would have perished, and was it not for so and so I would not have got such and such a thing, and was it not for so and so, my family would perish. Don't you see that he has made a partner for Allāh in His Kingdom, who sustains him and averts [evil from him]? [The narrator says:] I said: 'What if he were to say if Allāh would not have Blessed me with so and so I would have perished. The Imām (as) said: Yes, there is no problem in this and the like."(۱)

The above however should not lead one to overlook the traditions of expressing gratitude and thanks to whosoever has done good. Such traditions emphasize the 'nobility' of the agent of Allāh's Grace. But gratitude should never be mingled with polytheism and words of ignorance. In fact the good doer is required to express gratitude to Almighty Allāh for having given him the succor (tawfīq) to do all the good, and hence be availed with the Godly spirit.

The Imperfection of the Receptacle

Some times although the agent of grace is infinitely able, but the receptacle of grace is imperfect. Therefore, if the receptacle due to its narrowness cannot attain more than its capacity, the

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۱- Uddat al-Dā'ī, pg. ۹۹

fault is not with the Provider of Grace, Who is al-Jawād, and always wishes to give more and more. To explain this law, Almighty Allāh cites a very beautiful a parable is :Sūrat al-Ra'd

.أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا .

He sent down water from the sky, and the channels flowed, each according to their" (measure..."(١)

Hence, water is poured down in abundance, but not all receptacles receive equally. Those receptacles, which are narrow receive less, whereas those with greater capacity receive more. Therefore, it is not the fault of the provider, but the recipient .and receptacle

If this law is correctly understood, we will be able to realize the reason why many of the aforementioned requests are not accomplished. Consider the first two verses of :this noble supplication and apply the same law in the other verses

.O Allāh: Instill happiness in the hearts of the inhabitants of the grave

We said that one of the means of instilling happiness in the grave is seeking :forgiveness for the deceased

أَلْمَيِّتُ لَيَفْرَحُ بِالتَّرَحُّمِ عَلَيْهِ وَالإِسْتِغْـفَارِ...

Surely a dead person rejoices when he is pitied upon and forgiveness is sought for" (him...."(٢)

But such forgiveness can only benefit one who has not extinguished the light of his innate nature (al-fitrah) and has left this world in the state of belief (īmān). For the kuffār (those disbelievers who despite knowing the truth of Islam, rejected the same) seeking forgiveness would not instill any kind of happiness. Here the receptacle is deficient and not Allāh's Grace. The Holy Qur'ān citing examples

١- Holy Qur’ān, ١٣:١٧

٢- al-Mahajjat al-Baydā’, v. ٨. pg. ٢٩٢

:of such hard-hearted people says

.ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِکَ فَهِیَ کَالْحِجارَهِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَهً .

Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in“ (hardness…”(١)

And in verses ۶-۷ of chapter al-Baqarah Almighty Allāh informs us about the :disbelievers that

.إِنَّ الَّذِینَ کَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَیْهِمْ أَ أَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لاَ یُؤْمِنُونَ. خَتَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَی قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَی سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَی أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَهٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِیمٌ .

As for the disbelievers, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn“ them, they will not believe. Allāh has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and ”.there is a blindfold on their sight, and there is a great punishment for them

It should be noted that these disbelievers earned the causes that lead to the sealing of the hearts themselves. One should therefore not make an error and conceive that Allāh (swt) forcefully sealed their hearts and they had no volition to select a better path. However eagerly were we to aspire for the salvation of such people, there is no .room for change, because the receptacle is deficient

:Perhaps the following verse draws our attention to the same situation

.اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لاَ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِینَ مَرَّهً فَلَنْ یَغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ذٰلِکَ بِأَنَّهُمْ کَفَرُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاللّٰهُ لاَ یَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِینَ .

Whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even“ if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, God shall never forgive them because

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Holy Qur’ān, ٢:٧۴ -١

(they defied God and His Apostle; and God does not guide the transgressing lot."(1)

O Allāh Enrich Every Poor Person

Those poor people who continue doing acts that hinder their sustenance, should never dream to be rich. Negative poverty both in the material as well as spiritual sense is a deficiency that comes about due to the receptacle of sustenance. Persistence in extravagant spending, indiscipline, etc. are a practical expression of saying 'I do not want to be self-sufficient. Therefore the individual as well as the society in order to attain affluence should eradicate the impediment hampering their receptacle of grace.

In short, not getting our needs, even if they serve as means for our spiritual upliftment, is due to the impediments that we create and bring about.

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In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

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(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

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replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

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